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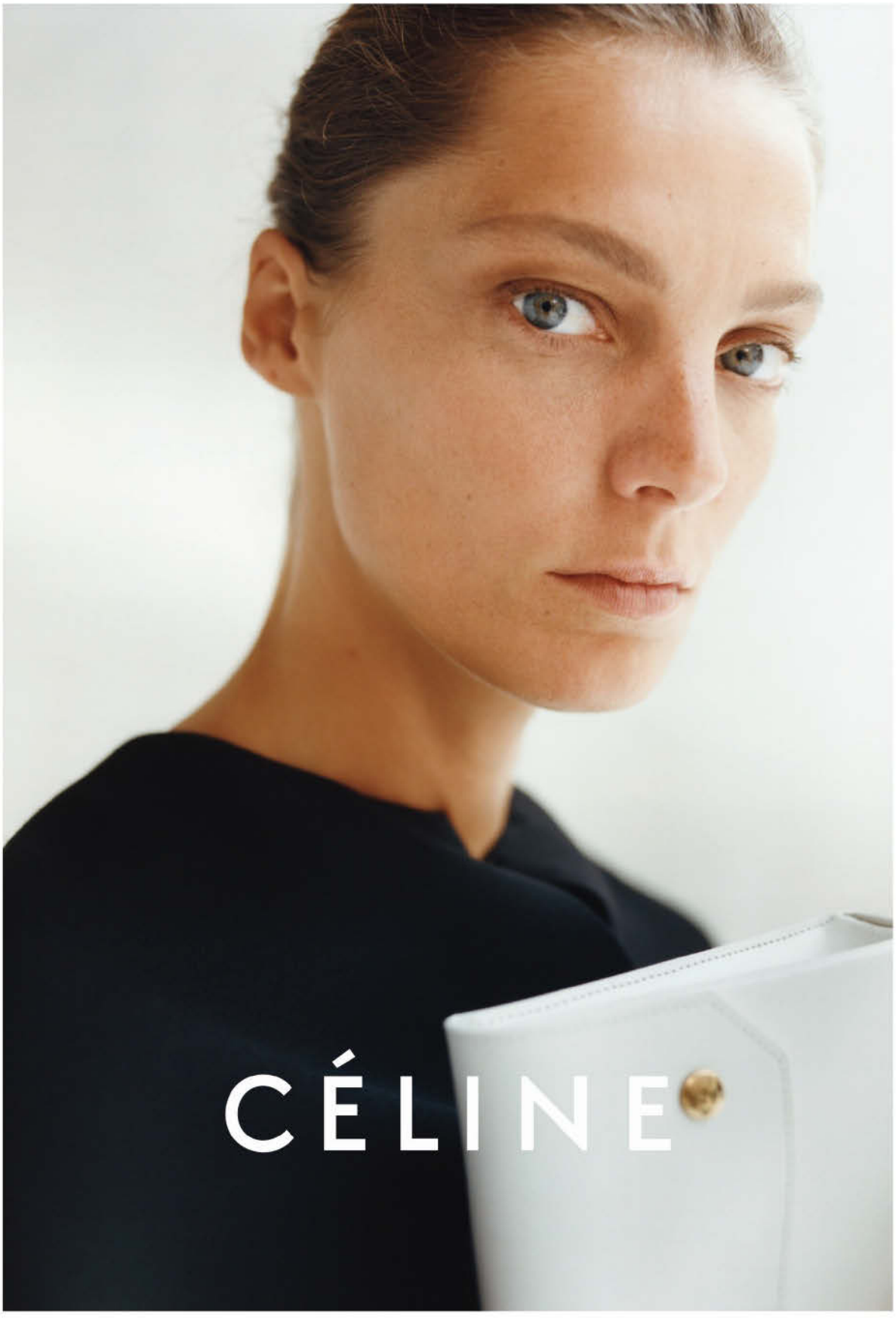


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FROM LEFT: A *Nutcracker* ballerina (page 86); Tony Blair (page 54); Bradley Cooper (page 44).

VANITY FAIR

JANUARY 2015 No. 653



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FEATURES

44 **HIS ELEPHANT, HIS WAY** *By* BUZZ BISSINGER
Whether in *Silver Linings Playbook, American Hustle,* or the current Broadway revival of *The Elephant Man,* **Bradley Cooper** has always been willing to take risks. But this month's *American Sniper* finds him far outside his comfort zone. Photographs by Sam Jones.

50 **BELLES ON WHEELS** Spotlight on *Broad City*'s **Abbi Jacobson** and **Ilana Glazer,** as they ride into Season Two. By Nell Scovell. Photograph by Gavin Bond.

52 **THE WORDS OF WAR** Spotlight on **six veterans** of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan who've turned combat into literature. By Lea Carpenter. Photograph by Jonas Fredwall Karlsson.

54 **THE WHICH BLAIR PROJECT** *By* SARAH ELLISON
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60 **WHAT HAPPENS IN *VEGAS*... COMES TO BROADWAY** Spotlight on Broadway's ***Honeymoon in Vegas.*** By Bruce Handy. Photograph by Ruven Afanador.

62 **SOMETHING ABOUT ELLIE** *By* CURTIS SITTENFELD
After winning over audiences in ensemble and supporting roles (*The Office, Bridesmaids,* etc.), **Ellie Kemper** is starring in a show—co-created by Tina Fey—of her own. Photograph by Claiborne Swanson Frank.

66 **ANGELA'S ASSETS** *By* MAUREEN ORTH
German chancellor **Angela Merkel** has wielded greater power on the global stage than any of her male predecessors. Yet, as her country achieves new prominence, the woman known as "Mutti" is still an enigma.

72 **AN AFFAIR OF THE ART** Spotlight on **Glenn Allen Sims** and **Linda Celeste Sims,** whose pas de deux shines at Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. By Wayne Lawson. Photograph by Bjorn Iooss.

74 **THE UNMANAGEABLES** *By* SARAH ELLISON
When **Pierre Omidyar,** eBay billionaire, got the media bug, he enlisted journalistic mavericks, including Glenn Greenwald and Laura Poitras (with their Snowden-document trove). The result has made headlines—if not the kind Omidyar wanted. Photo illustration by Sean McCabe.

78 **PRETTY IN PYNCHON** Spotlight on **Sasha Pieterse,** getting big-screen time in *Inherent Vice.* By Krista Smith. Photograph by Rene & Radka.

COOPER PHOTOGRAPHED BY SAM JONES; T-SHIRT BY RAG & BONE. *THE NUTCRACKER* PHOTOGRAPHED BY HENRY LEUTWYLER. PHOTOGRAPH BY ALASTAIR GRANT/A.P. IMAGES (BLAIR). ILLUSTRATION BY RISKO. FOR DETAILS, GO TO VF.COM/CREDITS

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LET'S GO.





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80 **THE HENRY FORD OF BOOKS**
By TODD S. PURDUM The planet's best-selling author since 2001, **James Patterson** pumps out books, has TV shows in the works, and champions causes with a laserlike focus and unerring instincts. When it comes to what he knows best, it's his way or the highway. Photographs by Gasper Tringale.

86 **BALANCHINE'S CHRISTMAS MIRACLE**
By LAURA JACOBS Fifty years ago, George Balanchine's production of ***The Nutcracker,*** the ballet blockbuster that's become an American holiday tradition, was transplanted to its new home at New York City's Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. It all began with the tree . . . Photographs by Henry Leutwyler.

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30 **AROUND THE WORLD, ONE PARTY AT A TIME** Bottega Veneta and L.A.'s Hammer Museum celebrate "Gala in the Garden." Seth Meyers hosts the N.R.D.C.'s comedy night in N.Y.C.

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32 **BEHIND CLOSING DOORS** *By* JAMES WOLCOTT In the year of **Jay Z** and **Solange Knowles's** post-Met-gala meltdown and **Ray Rice's** assault on his fiancée (now wife), the usually ho-hum elevator ride has provided high drama.

36 **THE IRONY AND THE ECSTASY**
By MICHAEL KINSLEY For G.O.P. presidential contenders, the apotheosis of **the Reagan era** is an article of faith. They should be appalled by the Gipper's actual record. Illustrations by Barry Blitt.

38 **THE CHINESE CENTURY** *By* JOSEPH E. STIGLITZ In 2014, **China overtook the U.S.** as the world's largest economy. The natural American reaction would be to "contain" China—and that, says a Nobel-laureate economist, would be a mistake.

ET CETERA

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ALL NUMBER ONES—SOME WITH BULLETS!

110 **PROUST QUESTIONNAIRE** DAVID BYRNE

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KEMPER PHOTOGRAPHED BY CLAIBORNE SWANSON FRANK; DRESS BY FENDI. PIETERSE PHOTOGRAPHED BY RENE & RADKA; DRESS BY FENDI. PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY SEAN MCCABE TOMIDYAR; FOR CREDITS, TURN TO PAGE 76. FOR DETAILS, GO TO VF.COM/CREDITS

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[1]Mintel "Marketing Financial Services to Women," November 2012.

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agenda ›

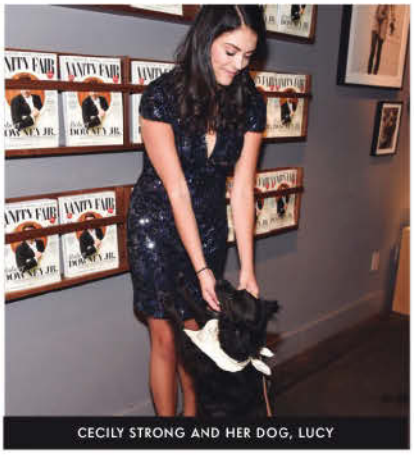
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EVENT

Where the Dogs Are

On Thursday, October 16, *Vanity Fair* and Shinola, along with *Saturday Night Live* actor Cecily Strong, celebrated the launch of Shinola Pet Accessories, a collaboration with photographer and animal lover Bruce Weber. Strong attended the event with her dog, Lucy, who she adopted from Best Friends Animal Society, the evening's benefiting charity. Guests enjoyed hors d'oeuvres and drinks from New York City restaurant The Smile, and took pictures in the event photo booth, while guests' dogs were accessorized with Shinola bandannas.



CECILY STRONG AND HER DOG, LUCY



LAUREN GRAHAM, PETER KRAUSE, AND MAE WHITMAN

EVENT

The NBC Stars Come Out at Night

On Tuesday, September 16, *Vanity Fair* and NBC raised a glass to the 2014–15 television season with a star-studded red-carpet event. Accented with neon-lit NBC peacocks, Hyde Sunset Kitchen and Cocktails was awash with talent from the network's fall shows, such as Kate Walsh (*Bad Judge*); Katherine Heigl and Alfre Woodard (*State of Affairs*); Adam Scott, Retta, and Rashida Jones (*Parks and Recreation*); Casey Wilson and Ken Marino (*Marry Me*); Cristin Milioti and Ben Feldman (*A to Z*); Lauren Graham and Peter Krause (*Parenthood*); and the adorable under-18 set including Benjamin Stockham (*About a Boy*), and Tyree Brown and Xolo Maridueña (*Parenthood*). D.J. MC Lyte provided the soundtrack for the evening as guests sipped on Ketel One cocktails inspired by the shows, which played on oversize screens throughout the venue.



KATHERINE HEIGL AND KATE WALSH



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NIGEL PARRY

When the good people of Britain opened up their *Sunday Times* one morning in November—actually, they didn't even have to open it—they were treated to what the editors knew was a delicious scoop: the private details of former prime minister Tony Blair's 21-page consulting contract from 2010 with PetroSaudi, an oil company founded by a member of the Saudi royal family. Blair, it turns out, had been receiving roughly $66,000 a month for his services, along with an additional 2 percent of any deal that might result from his working his connections. There's nothing technically wrong with former leaders spinning their Rolodexes to bankroll their retirement. What makes Blair's arrangement noteworthy is the fact that he was brokering his access on behalf of the Saudis even as he continued to be active in the Middle East as the chief representative of the so-called Quartet, the group of four entities (the U.N., the U.S., the European Union, and Russia) that are working toward peace in the region. The *Sunday Times* report had Blair's critics wondering once again about his worldwide business activities and the conflicts of interest they present.

As Sarah Ellison reports in "The Which Blair Project," on page 54, the man at the center of the controversy is cheerily unrepentant. For her investigation of his very lucrative former-prime-ministership, Ellison spoke at length with Blair himself and also to many onetime associates involved in the shadowy web of companies and foundations that constitute Blair, Inc. Tony Blair's view of Tony Blair is, as you might expect, somewhat forgiving. He sees his business activities—many of them in partnership with sketchy countries and their sketchy leaders—as a way of earning money that he can then turn over to his various philanthropies. (Think of this, perhaps, as the Robin Hood model.) *And if one picks up a few scraps for oneself along the way, well, what of it?,* Blair might say. The whole business is part of a long pattern of self-dealing and lack of candor that extends back to his time in office, when Blair was George W. Bush's all-too-willing dogsbody in the rush to invade Iraq. Blair may be one of the wealthier former prime ministers in British history; he's certainly one of the least popular. Tony and his wife, Cherie, are living very well—though not, given his schedule, very often living well together. Lord only knows how that marriage functions.

As Ellison notes, Blair is now held in such contempt in his own country that he canceled a book party when his memoirs came out, in 2010, for fear of demonstrations. He wasn't invited to the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton. And at a restaurant in Shoreditch early last year, a waiter tried to perform a citizen's arrest of Blair for his alleged complicity in war crimes. It used to be that former prime ministers enjoyed a serene afterlife. They'd retire to the shires to write their memoirs, serve on boards, and perhaps teach a bit. What they didn't do was go about cutting deals on behalf of tin-pot potentates with dubious human-rights records. Perhaps more important for Blair on that Sunday morning in November, they didn't direct their considerable charms in the direction of the wives of Sunday-newspaper owners.

If you live in China, you can be forgiven for not hearing the news—curiously, the authorities in Beijing put a lid on the information. But at some point late in 2014, China surpassed the United States as the world's largest economy. Chinese leaders have been nervous about this moment. As Nobel laureate and regular *V.F.* contributor Joseph E. Stiglitz points out in "The Chinese Century," on page 38, being number one carries some baggage. You're expected to be an upstanding global citizen, and to care about nettlesome things like global warming, free trade, and human rights. You also run the risk of raising questions among your own people—on the order of "If we're so rich, why am I so poor?"

But there's another reason the Chinese are skittish about being number one, and it's a legitimate worry. They're concerned about the reaction of number two. The United States has gotten used to its top-dog status, and too many people in Washington think of the global economy as a zero-sum game: China's gains can come only at America's expense. That's not true, but if you think otherwise, your reaction will be to promote a euphemistic program of economic "containment"—that is to say, make life hard for China no matter what it tries to do. So, maybe Beijing wants to foster Third World investment. Or play a larger role in the World Bank. The response from Washington, all too often, is discouragement or outright hostility. This is a shortsighted strategy, Stiglitz argues. The U.S. has no choice but to cooperate with the world's largest economy—as Britain learned to do a century ago, when it was overtaken by a boisterous America.

It will be a while before even China can produce a writing machine to rival James Patterson's. One out of every 26 hardcover books of fiction sold in the U.S. in 2013 had his name on the spine. With about 300 million copies of his books in print, and a team of two dozen collaborators, Patterson is, to put it bluntly, operating a literary conveyor belt. As Todd S. Purdum notes in "The Henry Ford of Books," on page 80, he can be prickly about his standing and his profession. He once glared at an interviewer who suggested that Patterson was "churning" the books out. (He prefers the word "crafting.")

In some ways Patterson's a throwback—it's hard not to recall the assembly-line days of the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew books. He writes while reclining on a sleigh bed. (And, bless him, in the photo on pages 80 and 81, he has a galley of Michael Connelly's superb new procedural at his side.) A shelf nearby holds a dozen or more works in progress in neat stacks. Patterson's personal story is about the intersection of willpower and native savvy. He began life in a hardscrabble household in depressed Newburgh, New York. He rose to become head of the North American branch of J. Walter Thompson. Meanwhile, he had begun his writing career. Patterson lives not far from the area he grew up in, although in a bigger home, with a river view. He has a place in Palm Beach that he gets to by private jet. Last year, his income was $90 million. It's a sum even a former prime minister might envy. —GRAYDON CARTER


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Fairground


Sia


Jim Carrey


Joni Mitchell and Rita McBride


Marco Bizzarri


Los Angeles mayor Eric Garcetti and Ann Philbin


Elizabeth Banks and Tracee Ellis Ross




Rashida Jones and Kara Walker


Dianna Agron

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER WINTERSTELLER


Sam Taylor-Johnson


Orlando Bloom


Julia Roberts, Rita Wilson, and Dana Delany


Demi Moore, Tony Goldwyn, and Kate Bosworth

PATRONS OF THE ARTS

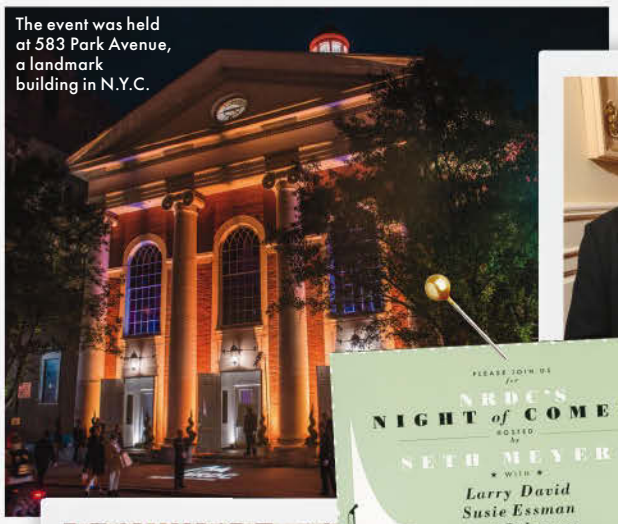
Musician Joni Mitchell and artist Mark Bradford were the honorees at the Hammer Museum's 12th annual "Gala in the Garden," in Los Angeles. The event, which supports the institution's nationally acclaimed exhibitions and free public programs, was generously supported by Bottega Veneta.


Mark Bradford


Will Ferrell and Jack Black


Cameron Crowe and Jerry Moss


John Baldessari and Zoë Saldana



The event was held at 583 Park Avenue, a landmark building in N.Y.C.



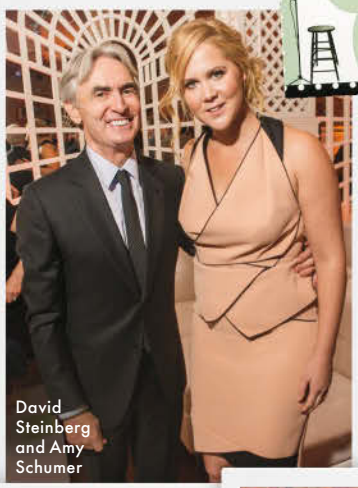
Anna Scott Carter and Frances Beinecke



Larry David and Seth Meyers



Matt Blank, Ted Harbert, and David Zaslav



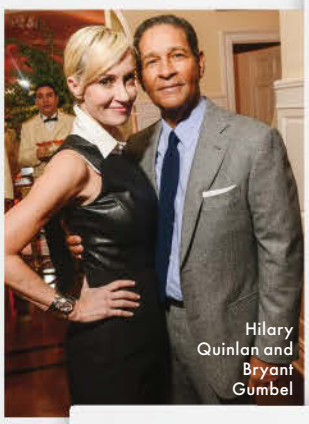
David Steinberg and Amy Schumer



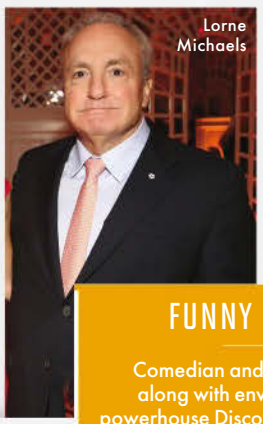
Jerry Seinfeld



Guests mingled before the performance.



Hilary Quinlan and Bryant Gumbel



Lorne Michaels

FUNNY BUSINESS

Comedian and host Seth Meyers, along with environmental media powerhouse Discovery Communications, presented an evening filled with laughter as champions and supporters of the Natural Resources Defense Council came together in New York City to raise money for environmental and health initiatives.



Susie Essman



Betsy Kenny Lack and Carey Lowell

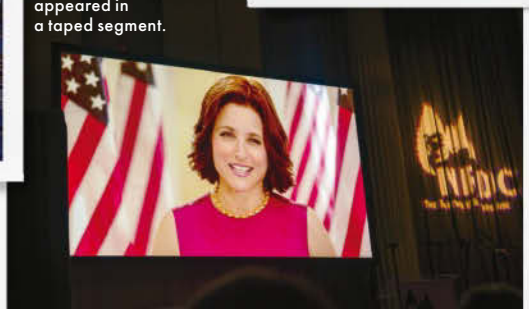


Alexi Ashe and Claire Bernard



Guests snacked on popcorn.

Julia Louis-Dreyfus appeared in a taped segment.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATTHEW COHEN (MICHAELS); FROM MAYA KOVACHEVA PHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY IMAGES (PIN); BY HANNAH THOMSON (ALL OTHERS)

JAMES WOLCOTT



GOING DOWN? You might think we're alone now, but beware the elevator cam.

BEHIND CLOSING DOORS

Once a zombie moment, filled with stilted small talk and downward gazes, the elevator ride now is often another barrage of ads and news. But elevator videos stream both ways—as Jay Z, Ray Rice, and others can attest—providing some of the year's top viral obsessions

Like most zombie Americans, I tend to zone out once tucked inside an elevator. For us introverted chaps, the slide of the closing doors can be like the lowering of eyelids to begin meditation, the cue to attend to the white noise within and without. Or, if one is in a more sociable frame of mind, it can be a bitsy opportunity for mindless chit-chat in which the mouth forms words while the mind drifts elsewhere. Ideally, an elevator ride offers brief entry—a bracketed interval between points A and B—into what the authors Orvar Löfgren and Billy Ehn called "the secret world of doing nothing," which served as the title for their engaging study of everyday ethnography (2010). It's a tiny packet of "me time," a momentary prelude when one waits like an actor in the wings before dispersing into the lobby or wandering around the hall trying to find the chiropodist's office. But today no captive audience is safe from the info-and-advertising stream, the panel screens in so many modern elevators flashing news, weather, sports, stock-market updates, and photos of office views, which, unlike the intrusions in the backs of taxicabs, can't be vanquished with an irritable jab of a thumb. In the Digital Age, not only does information want to be free, it insists on getting in your face. In the post-9/11 panopticon of security cams, viral Internet videos, and TMZ, not only is news being piped into the elevator, it's exploding out of it and taking down careers with it. Nothing is safe from the Eye of Sauron, and 2014 was, among other things, the year of the elevator video.

Elevator videos are not a new genre of peekaboo. The boxily confined space—so suitable for controlled studies of strangers under certain stimuli, so conducive to micro-analysis of claustrophobia, panic, and group behavior—has been a perfect staging site for pranks and social-psychology tests, which have often overlapped. In 1962, the

PHOTOGRAPH FROM GETTY IMAGES; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY *VANITY FAIR*


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TV show *Candid Camera* pulled a classic stunt called "Face the Rear" in which it had actors standing in the wrong direction in an elevator, facing the back wall, then showed how an unsuspecting rider would step into the car and, after a momentary bafflement, turn and face the wall too rather than be out of sync with the others. The *Candid Camera* segment complemented the "Asch Conformity Experiments" performed by Gestalt psychologist Solomon Asch, and the shocking obedience-to-authority experiments conducted by social psychologist Stanley Milgram, who had assisted Asch at Harvard. The result might be interpreted as a comic parable for the Age of Conformity, except that when a similar stunt was unscientifically staged in an elevator at the Juilliard School in 2013 on the ABC primetime show *Would You Fall for That?* the first two subjects shown under surveillance turned and faced the rear rather than be the odd ones out. What lemmings we mortals be. The elevator-as-laboratory-theater took a gruesome turn in 2013 when the marketing agency Thinkmodo hired a pair of actors and faked a murder in progress to record the reactions of New Yorkers about to board the car. The video of this hoax went viral, or should I say venereal. The majority of elevator vids that go YouTube-crazy, however, are the strictly vérité ones, such as the nightmare incident that could have come from a *Final Destination* film in which a man found himself trapped in a malfunctioning elevator that rocketed up 30 floors in 15 seconds *with the doors open* and smashed into the roof; fortunately, unlike the ill-fated patsy in *Final Destination 2,* he survived. Harrowing as this was, it was a momentary blip compared with big elevator breakers of 2014.

In May, the elevator at the Standard hotel in New York was the site of an impromptu steel-cage grudge match between Jay Z, renowned rapper and husband of the Queen of the Milky Way, Beyoncé, and her sister, Solange Knowles, who wields a mean handbag in close quarters. The altercation took place on the night of the Met Museum's Costume Institute Gala, which is traditionally a pressure-cooker occasion in Manhattan, a Tom Wolfe–ish spectacularama of fame, money, and social cachet as fraught with intrigue, status jockeying, and dueling décolletage as an opera ball in Balzac, and let no one tell you different. The animated tussle has been attributed to Jay Z's expressed desire to exit solo to attend Rihanna's after-party, and I think we can all agree that a Rihanna after-party would be a pretty kicky affair. Allegedly, Solange didn't approve of Jay Z's unilateral bugout and voiced her opinion with perhaps more vigor than the situation required, and before reason could prevail she was flailing at him with arms and legs like an angry windmill until a bodyguard enfolded her in a bear hug, as happens almost every day on *Jerry Springer.* Another speculative theory holds that Solange was incensed over Jay Z's getting too chummy with designer Rachel Roy, but the source of the ignition spark really doesn't matter. Considering the exalted position that Jay Z and Beyoncé hold in the entertainment firmament, it was as if Pippa Middleton lost it after some command performance and tried to lay some Tae Kwon Do on Prince William. The incident might have remained a private psychodrama had it not been for the leaking of the CCTV video to TMZ by a hotel employee, who was soon identified and fired. The fracas was spoofed everywhere from *Saturday Night Live* to the CMT Music Awards and predictably inspired a torn-from-the-headlines episode of *Law & Order: SVU* and now is looked back upon almost fondly, a souvenir from the continuing saga that is the Jay-Bey Olympiad.

No comedy or melodrama was to be wrung from the episode in late August when the C.E.O. of the food-and-beverage corporation Centerplate, which services event venues and sports arenas across the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, was caught mistreating a friend's one-year-old Doberman pinscher puppy in a Vancouver elevator. I've watched the video only once, with one eye shut and the other squinting, because I find any depiction of the mistreatment of animals acutely upsetting, even in fiction films when we are assured in the final credits that no animals were harmed during the production. Rather than dwell on the unpleasant particulars, marvel at the speed of the viral vigilante outcry that led to the C.E.O. (whose name doesn't need another airing) being forced to resign after social media went on the warpath and a Change.org petition calling for his firing racked up close to 200,000 signatures. Less than two minutes of elevator video lobbed onto the Internet and, poof, up in smoke went a career. Retribution is ours, sayeth the Internet.

And no one knows that better than Ray Rice, the former star running back for the Baltimore Ravens, who had a September to remember, for all the wrong reasons. Last February, Rice and his then fiancée, later wife, Janay Palmer, were arrested for assault and released following a fight at Revel Casino Hotel, in Atlantic City. A few days later TMZ showed a surveillance video of Rice dragging Palmer like a limp doll from the elevator, trying to haul her to her feet before letting her flop facedown while a security person moseys over. The assault charge against Palmer was dropped and the charge against Rice was raised to aggravated assault. The day after the indictment was issued Rice and Palmer were married. In May, in a decision that will not go down in the annals of Great Moments in Damage Control, the Ravens orchestrated a press conference where the somber newlyweds appeared side by side and made a public act of contrition for the harm and turmoil the incident had caused, though it was unclear to most onlookers what Palmer, the recipient of a knockout blow, needed to apologize for. The hollow sham of it all blew open when, in late July, N.F.L. commissioner Roger Goodell suspended Rice for a measly two games, a punishment that everyone except the most rabid Ravens fans in their purple pajamas thought was a wrist slap. Yet the controversy might have trickled away, supplanted by some other football-related, police-blotter uproar (of which there is seldom a shortage), if, in September, TMZ hadn't obtained and released the heretofore unseen Part One of the Ray Rice video, the prequel in the elevator that showed how Palmer had been forcibly put out of commission—with a punch that sent her flying backward into the railing, where she hit her head. Revel closed in September, another victim of Atlantic City's ailing economy, and this video will be remembered as part of its melancholy legacy.

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FOR THE BEST ELEVATOR MOMENTS IN TV AND FILM, GO TO VF.COM/JAN2015.

The most portentous elevator incident of 2014 involved a bit of disruptive behavior that could have been the lead-up to something far worse and, so far, hasn't surfaced on video. Zeke J Miller, a political reporter for *Time,* documented what could have been a history-altering moment: "A private contractor at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta boarded the presidential elevator on Sept. 16 and wouldn't heed orders to stop photographing Obama. Agents pulled the man aside for questioning after Obama left the elevator, at which point the man's supervisor fired him on the spot for his behavior. It was only then that officers discovered that the man, who [had been] arrested several times, was carrying a firearm, officials said." If a presidential elevator isn't secure, then even us peons had better never lower our attentive guard, especially in a gun-promiscuous culture like ours. Who knows who might step through the sliding doors next? □

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- **Jay Z, hip-hop icon** *(Lisa Robinson, November 2013)*

There is only one Bellagio.



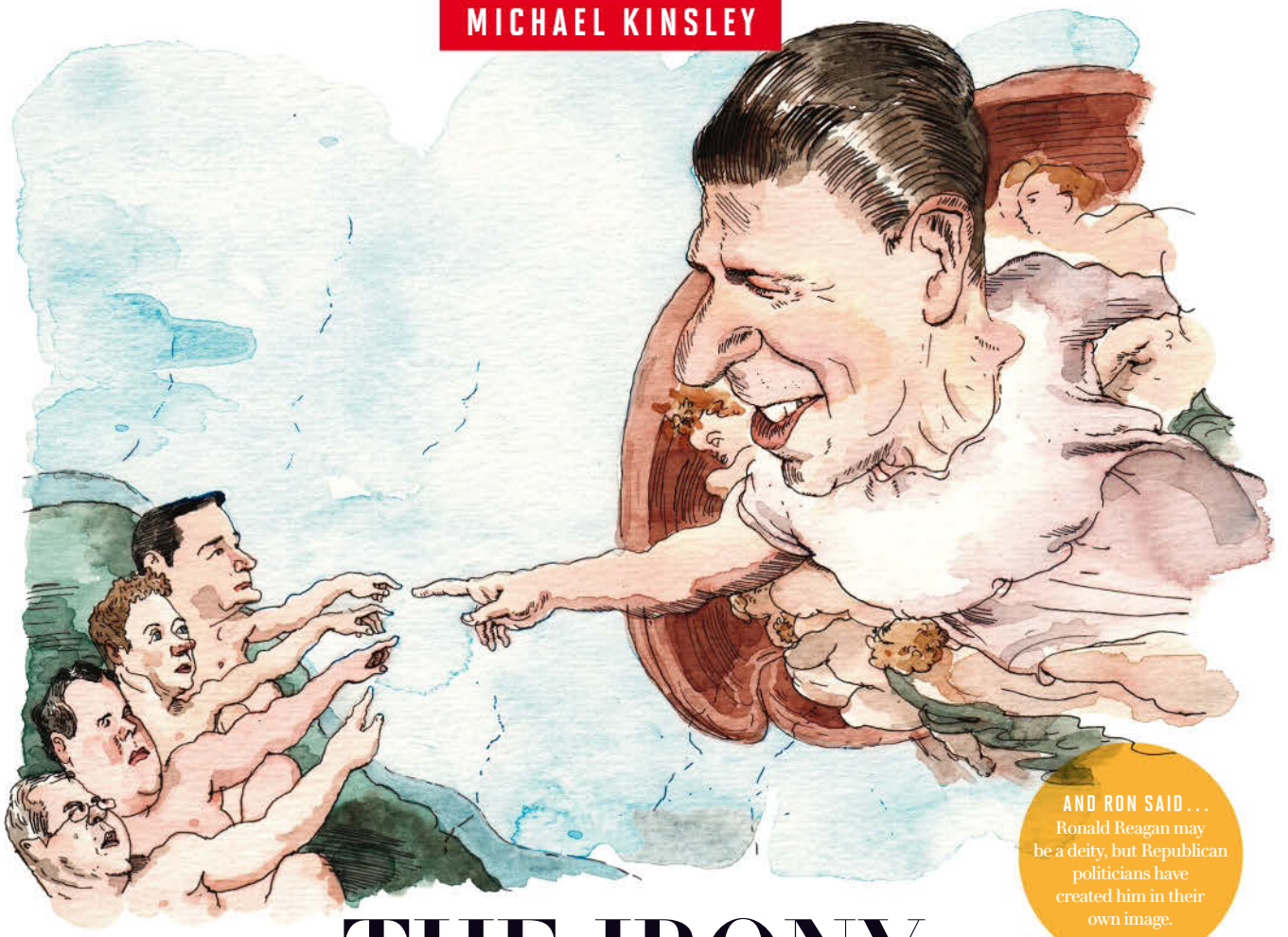
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AND RON SAID . . .
Ronald Reagan may be a deity, but Republican politicians have created him in their own image.

THE IRONY AND THE ECSTASY

Every serious G.O.P. presidential aspirant invokes the glorious era of Ronald Reagan, to which the country must return. Ignore the fact that, for the likes of Paul Ryan and Rand Paul, Reagan's actual record—from increased bureaucracy to higher deficits—should be seen as a complete failure

Paul Ryan doesn't care for "politics or politicians." He says so in his recent book, *The Way Forward: Renewing the American Idea.* He prefers the ordinary folks of his childhood in small-town Wisconsin. It must have been sheer selflessness that propelled him into Congress at age 28. As chairman of the House Budget Committee (and the Republican vice-presidential nominee in 2012, who is eyeing 2016), Ryan has to deal with politicians all day long. Yuck!

But there is one politician who escapes Ryan's censure: "The one exception was Ronald Reagan. I knew about him mostly because my dad thought his story was so inspiring. . . . An Irish guy who . . . had overcome a childhood of modest means and adversity and become president of the United States." Ryan Sr. "would often see Reagan on the news and nod quietly, approvingly."

Things were pretty dire when Reagan took office back in 1981, as Ryan remembers it. But Reagan "was not defeated or deterred. Instead, he proposed a plan to get America back on track."

Well, yes, in his speech to a joint session of Congress shortly after becoming president, Reagan presented his "plan"—a reasonably detailed discussion of proposed tax cuts and spending cuts, pursuant to his vision of smaller government. The thing is, almost none of these changes ever

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BARRY BLITT

happened. The tax cuts went through in 1981 but were partially repealed in 1982. In his "plan," Reagan promised to cut two Cabinet departments (Energy and Education). Instead he added one (Veterans Affairs, now the government's second-largest). Ryan chooses to remember the Reagan of 1981, when anything was possible. This allows him to take Reagan's promises as some kind of reality. Thirty-four years down the road, it's too late for that.

If you're thinking of running for president, you need to have a book. I don't mean own one—I mean write one. Or at least pretend to do so. You don't actually have to write the book, as long as your name is on the cover as if you did. The contents don't matter much. They can be your "vision"—lifted in whole or in part from think-tank research on the Web. They can be your life story. If you love your wife or husband, mention that here. Ditto if you've ever overcome adversity of any kind. Do you like hunting? Great! Got any photos of you and an animal carcass?

But the indispensable ingredient of a campaign book, if you are a Republican, is Ronald Reagan. Somewhere in the book, you must invoke the memory of our 40th president and say that we should return to his values of small government, low taxes, self-reliance, and so on. I'm sorry, it's a rule. (Even Arianna has to obey. "But I am not a Republican, darling," she protested. "This is outrageous—I haven't been a Republican for over a decade and am not scheduled to become one again, at least for the moment.")

You can usually get a Republican to admit, if you beat him or her with a stick, that Reagan's actual performance in office was a bit of a disappointment. But that, you see, is because the Democrats were so vicious in opposing Reagan's policies. What you cannot get many Republicans to admit is that the entire Reaganite golden age is a fantasy—even if they really think so. Why burst the bubble?



REALITY CHECK
What would it actually mean to "return" to being a country ruled by the values of Ronald Reagan?

What can people possibly mean when they say they want America to "return" to being a country ruled by the values of Ronald Reagan? When was this blissful time when thrift and hard work were rewarded and the government knew its place? Certainly not when Reagan was actually president. Under President Reagan (1981–89), the size of the federal government increased by any measure. Executive-branch civilian employment, which covers almost everything except the uniformed military and the Postal Service, was 2.109 million in 1981 and 2.129 million in 1989. Total federal-government employment rose during this period from 4.9 million to 5.3 million.

I could go on. Well, why not? Reagan inherited a federal budget of $599 billion in revenue, $678 billion in spending, and a deficit of $79 billion. He left office with a federal budget of $909 billion in revenue, a little less than $1.1 *trillion* in spending, and a deficit of $155 billion.

If you're looking for a good bureaucracy slasher, try Bill Clinton. In his eight years, the size of the executive-branch workforce dropped more than 10 percent, from 2.9 million to 2.6 million. Plus, Clinton has got a better "overcoming adversity" story than anyone was able to concoct for Reagan. Reagan's life, like his disposition, was overwhelmingly sunny. He grew up middle-class in the Midwest, enjoyed relatively quick success in Hollywood, moved into politics, and triumphed there too. Clinton had a Southern Gothic upbringing—he famously had to stop his stepfather from beating his mother. Nothing that dramatic on Reagan's résumé.

In his book *A Simple Government,* former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee (who won the door prize in the 2008 election: his own TV show) praised Reagan's mastery of the economy and the federal budget: "When President Reagan cut the top [income tax] rate from 70% to 28%, revenues went from $517 billion in 1980 to over a trillion in 1990. When the Reagan tax cuts took effect in 1983, real growth (not just inflationary growth) jumped 7.5% in 1983 and 5.5% in 1984 after no growth in 1981 and 1982. Our GDP grew by a third during Reagan's two terms."

Well, yes and no (but mostly no). Reagan wasn't president for 10 years (it just seemed that way). Inflation alone in Reagan's eight years would have raised the value of $599 billion of revenue to $780 billion, even if the real economy had flatlined. It's true that the G.D.P. grew by a third during Reagan's two terms. In the two terms that followed (George Bush and Clinton I), it rose by nearly as much, and in Clinton's last term it soared.

The notion that Reagan "had overcome a childhood of modest means and adversity" is Ryan's way of paying obeisance while avoiding the facts. Huckabee's strategy for accomplishing the same thing is to confuse the issue with random statistics that don't even match those of the Government Accountability Office. Texas governor Rick Perry tries a third approach. He concedes that Reagan deserves part of the blame for repeated Republican failures to live up to their promises. Nevertheless, he maintains in *his* recent book, *Fed Up!: Our Fight to Save America from Washington,* that Reagan "inspired a generation of Americans—including me—to remember the rugged individualism and self-determination that made this country great." In what way, exactly, did Reagan demonstrate "rugged individualism" (except by having his picture taken on a horse)? Paul Ryan says that "we loved President Reagan . . . because he was one of us." Ryan never says exactly who "us" is. But if words have meaning at all, it sounds like the opposite of rugged individualism.

But didn't Reagan save us from Communism? We can argue about that (I'll take the "no" side). But he passed up all sorts of military opportunities to which his successors of both parties have succumbed. The only war he started was the quickie war in Grenada. In that sense, the Reagan administration was a golden age of peace.

If it's Hillary Clinton versus Rand Paul in 2016, it will be a Democratic hawk versus a Republican dove—a complete reversal of the natural order of things since World War II. Paul stands accused of trying to distance himself from some of the nuttier views of his father, the Libertarian Godfather, Ron Paul. However, Rand let Ron write the foreword to his recent book, *Government Bullies,* a collection of horror stories about loutish behavior by government agencies. Like many journalists, I find Rand Paul oddly appealing. It's mainly because he's something new in the tired stew of the 2016 campaign so far. But it's also partly that he can't hide his frustration—a trait that he shares with his father (and that is characteristic of libertarians in general), commonly exhibited when what he and they regard as obviously sensible opinions and proposals are challenged.

I'd bet that both Pauls, Ron and Rand, hold Ronald Reagan in contempt for having squandered a historic opportunity to do all sorts of unattractive libertarian things. But rules are rules: the first two words in Rand Paul's book are "Ronald Reagan." Right after the foreword by his dad. □

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- **Ronnie, Nancy, and the Reagan legacy** *(William F. Buckley Jr., June 1985; Bob Colacello, July and August 1998, July 2009; and Dominick Dunne, September 2004)*



SOFT POWER
For America, the best response to China is to put our own house in order.

THE CHINESE CENTURY

Without fanfare—indeed, with some misgivings about its new status—China has just overtaken the United States as the world's largest economy. This is, and should be, a wake-up call—but not the kind most Americans might imagine

By JOSEPH E. STIGLITZ

When the history of 2014 is written, it will take note of a large fact that has received little attention: 2014 was the last year in which the United States could claim to be the world's largest economic power. China enters 2015 in the top position, where it will likely remain for a very long time, if not forever. In doing so, it returns to the position it held through most of human history.

Comparing the gross domestic product of different economies is very difficult. Technical committees come up with estimates, based on the best judgments possible, of what are called "purchasing-power parities," which enable the comparison of incomes in various countries. These shouldn't be taken as precise numbers, but they do provide a good basis for assessing the relative size of different economies. Early in 2014, the body that conducts these international assessments—the World Bank's International Comparison Program—came out with new numbers. (The complexity of the task is such that there have been only three reports in 20 years.) The latest assessment, released last spring, was more contentious and, in some ways, more momentous than those in previous years. It was more contentious precisely

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because it was more momentous: the new numbers showed that China would become the world's largest economy far sooner than anyone had expected—it was on track to do so before the end of 2014.

The source of contention would surprise many Americans, and it says a lot about the differences between China and the U.S.—and about the dangers of projecting onto the Chinese some of our own attitudes. Americans want very much to be No. 1—we enjoy having that status. In contrast, China is not so eager. According to some reports, the Chinese participants even threatened to walk out of the technical discussions. For one thing, China did not want to stick its head above the parapet—being No. 1 comes with a cost. It means paying more to support international bodies such as the United Nations. It could bring pressure to take an enlightened leadership role on issues such as climate change. It might very well prompt ordinary Chinese to wonder if more of the country's wealth should be spent on them. (The news about China's change in status was in fact blacked out at home.) There was one more concern, and it was a big one: China understands full well America's psychological preoccupation with being No. 1—and was deeply worried about what our reaction would be when we no longer were.

Of course, in many ways—for instance, in terms of exports and household savings—China long ago surpassed the United States. With savings and investment making up close to 50 percent of G.D.P., the Chinese worry about having too much savings, just as Americans worry about having too little. In other areas, such as manufacturing, the Chinese overtook the U.S. only within the past several years. They still trail America when it comes to the number of patents awarded, but they are closing the gap.

The areas where the United States remains competitive with China are not always ones we'd most want to call attention to. The two countries have comparable levels of inequality. (Ours is the highest in the developed world.) China outpaces America in the number of people executed every year, but the U.S. is far ahead when it comes to the proportion of the population in prison (more than 700 per 100,000 people). China overtook the U.S. in 2007 as the world's largest polluter, by total volume, though on a per capita basis we continue to hold the lead. The United States remains the largest military power, spending more on our armed forces than the next top 10 nations combined (not that we have always used our military power wisely). But the bedrock strength of the U.S. has always rested less on hard military power than on "soft power," most notably its economic influence. That is an essential point to remember.

Tectonic shifts in global economic power have obviously occurred before, and as a result we know something about what happens when they do. Two hundred years ago, in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, Great Britain emerged as the world's dominant power. Its empire spanned a quarter of the globe. Its currency, the pound sterling, became the global reserve currency—as sound as gold itself. Britain, sometimes working in concert with its allies, imposed its own trade rules. It could discriminate against importation of Indian textiles and force India to buy British cloth. Britain and its allies could also insist that China keep its markets open to opium, and when China, knowing the drug's devastating effect, tried to close its borders, the allies twice went to war to maintain the free flow of this product.

Britain's dominance was to last a hundred years and continued even after the U.S. surpassed Britain economically, in the 1870s. There's always a lag (as there will be with the U.S. and China). The transitional event was World War I, when Britain achieved victory over Germany only with the assistance of the United States. After the war, America was as reluctant to accept its potential new responsibilities as Britain was to voluntarily give up its role. Woodrow Wilson did what he could to construct a postwar world that would make another global conflict less likely, but isolationism at home meant that the U.S. never joined the League of Nations. In the economic sphere, America insisted on going its own way—passing the Smoot-Hawley tariffs and bringing to an end an era that had seen a worldwide boom in trade. Britain maintained its empire, but gradually the pound sterling gave way to the dollar: in the end, economic realities dominate. Many American firms became global enterprises, and American culture was clearly ascendant.

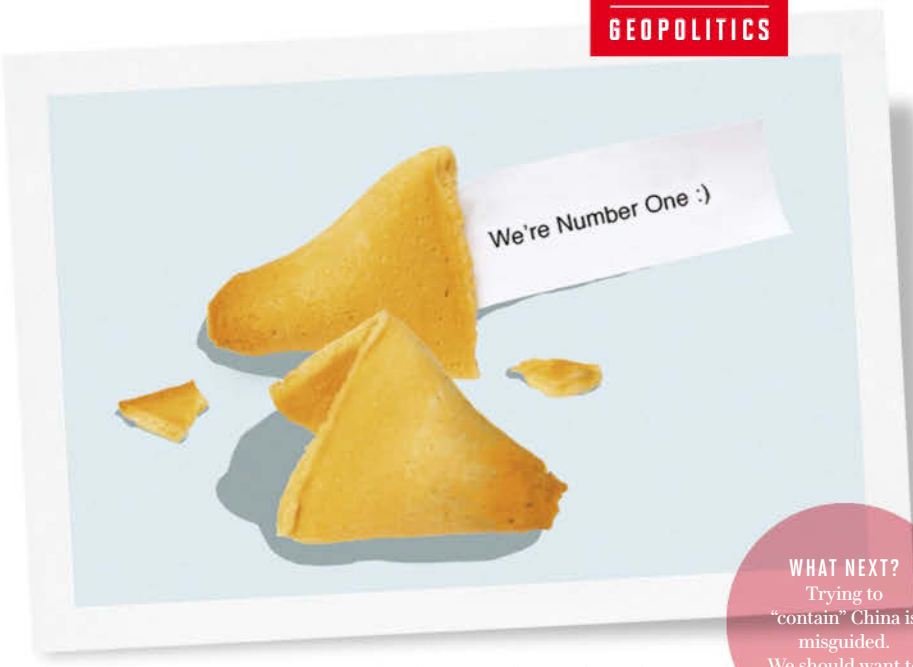
World War II was the next defining event. Devastated by the conflict, Britain would soon lose virtually all of its colonies. This time the U.S. did assume the mantle of leadership. It was central in creating the United Nations and in fashioning the Bretton Woods agreements, which would underlie the new political and economic order. Even so, the record was uneven. Rather than creating a global reserve currency, which would have contributed so much to worldwide economic stability—as John Maynard Keynes had rightly argued—the U.S. put its own short-term self-interest first, foolishly thinking it would gain by having the dollar become the world's reserve currency. The dollar's status is a mixed blessing: it enables the U.S. to borrow at a low interest rate, as others demand dollars to put into their reserves, but at the same time the value of the dollar rises (above what it otherwise would have been), creating or exacerbating a trade deficit and weakening the economy.

For 45 years after World War II, global politics was dominated by two superpowers, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., representing two very different visions both of how to organize and govern an economy and a society and of the relative importance of political and economic rights. Ultimately, the Soviet system was to fail, as much because of internal corruption, unchecked by democratic processes, as anything else. Its military power had been formidable; its soft power was increasingly a joke. The world was now dominated by a single superpower, one that continued to invest heavily in its military. That said, the U.S. was a superpower not just militarily but also economically.

The United States then made two critical mistakes. First, it inferred that its triumph meant a triumph for everything it stood for. But in much of the Third World, concerns about poverty—and the economic rights that had long been advocated by the left—remained paramount. The second mistake was to use the short period of its unilateral dominance, between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the fall of Lehman Brothers, to pursue its own narrow economic interests—or, more accurately, the economic interests of its multinationals, including its big banks—rather than to create a new, stable world order. The trade regime the U.S. pushed through in 1994, creating the World Trade Organization, was so unbalanced that, five years later, when another trade agreement was in the offing, the prospect led to riots in Seattle. Talking about free and fair trade, while insisting (for instance) on subsidies for its rich farmers, has cast the U.S. as hypocritical and self-serving.

And Washington never fully grasped the consequences of so many of its shortsighted actions—intended to extend and strengthen its dominance but in fact diminishing its long-term position. During the East Asia crisis, in the 1990s, the U.S. Treasury worked hard to undermine the so-called Miyazawa Initiative, Japan's generous offer of $100 billion to help jump-start economies that were sinking into recession and depression. The policies the U.S. pushed on these countries—austerity and high interest rates, with no bailouts for banks in trouble—were just the opposite of those that these same Treasury officials advocated for the U.S. after the meltdown of 2008. Even today, a decade and a half after the East Asia crisis, the mere mention of the U.S. role can prompt angry accusations and charges of hypocrisy in Asian capitals.

Now China is the world's No. 1 economic power. Why should we care? On one level, we actually shouldn't. The world economy is not a zero-sum game, where China's growth must necessarily come at the expense of ours. In fact, its growth is complementary to ours. If it grows faster, it will buy more of our goods, and we will pros-



per. There has always, to be sure, been a little hype in such claims—just ask workers who have lost their manufacturing jobs to China. But that reality has as much to do with our own economic policies at home as it does with the rise of some other country.

On another level, the emergence of China into the top spot matters a great deal, and we need to be aware of the implications.

First, as noted, America's real strength lies in its soft power—the example it provides to others and the influence of its ideas, including ideas about economic and political life. The rise of China to No. 1 brings new prominence to that country's political and economic model—and to its own forms of soft power. The rise of China also shines a harsh spotlight on the American model. That model has not been delivering for large portions of its own population. The typical American family is worse off than it was a quarter-century ago, adjusted for inflation; the proportion of people in poverty has increased. China, too, is marked by high levels of inequality, but its economy has been doing some good for most of its citizens. China moved some 500 million people out of poverty during the same period that saw America's middle class enter a period of stagnation. An economic model that doesn't serve a majority of its citizens is not going to provide a role model for others to emulate. America should see the rise of China as a wake-up call to put our own house in order.

Second, if we ponder the rise of China and then take actions based on the idea that the world economy is indeed a zero-sum game—and that we therefore need to boost our share and reduce China's—we will erode our soft power even further. This would be exactly the wrong kind of wake-up call. If we see China's gains as coming at our expense, we will strive for "containment," taking steps designed to limit China's influence. These actions will ultimately prove futile, but will nonetheless undermine confidence in the U.S. and its position of leadership. U.S. foreign policy has repeatedly fallen into this trap. Consider the so-called Trans-Pacific Partnership, a proposed free-trade agreement among the U.S., Japan, and several other Asian countries—which excludes China altogether. It is seen by many as a way to tighten the links between the U.S. and certain Asian countries, at the expense of links with China. There is a vast and dynamic Asia supply chain, with goods moving around the region during different stages of production; the Trans-Pacific Partnership looks like an attempt to cut China out of this supply chain.

WHAT NEXT? Trying to "contain" China is misguided. We should want to cooperate.

Another example: the U.S. looks askance at China's incipient efforts to assume global responsibility in some areas. China wants to take on a larger role in existing international institutions, but Congress says, in effect, that the old club doesn't like active new members: they can continue taking a backseat, but they can't have voting rights commensurate with their role in the global economy. When the other G-20 nations agree that it is time that the leadership of international economic organizations be determined on the basis of merit, not nationality, the U.S. insists that the old order is good enough—that the World Bank, for instance, should continue to be headed by an American.

Yet another example: when China, together with France and other countries—supported by an International Commission of Experts appointed by the president of the U.N., which I chaired—suggested that we finish the work that Keynes had started at Bretton Woods, by creating an international reserve currency, the U.S. blocked the effort.

And a final example: the U.S. has sought to deter China's efforts to channel more assistance to developing countries through newly created multilateral institutions in which China would have a large, perhaps dominant role. The need for trillions of dollars of investment in infrastructure has been widely recognized—and providing that investment is well beyond the capacity of the World Bank and existing multilateral institutions. What is needed is not only a more inclusive governance regime at the World Bank but also more capital. On both scores, the U.S. Congress has said no. Meanwhile, China is trying to create an Asian Infrastructure Fund, working with a large number of other countries in the region. The U.S. is twisting arms so that those countries won't join.

The United States is confronted with real foreign-policy challenges that will prove hard to resolve: militant Islam; the Palestine conflict, which is now in its seventh decade; an aggressive Russia, insisting on asserting its power, at least in its own neighborhood; continuing threats of nuclear proliferation. We will need the cooperation of China to address many, if not all, of these problems.

We should take this moment, as China becomes the world's largest economy, to "pivot" our foreign policy away from containment. The economic interests of China and the U.S. are intricately intertwined. We both have an interest in seeing a stable and well-functioning global political and economic order. Given historical memories and its own sense of dignity, China won't be able to accept the global system simply as it is, with rules that have been set by the West, to benefit the West and its corporate interests, and that reflect the West's perspectives. We will have to cooperate, like it or not—and we should want to. In the meantime, the most important thing America can do to maintain the value of its soft power is to address its own systemic deficiencies—economic and political practices that are corrupt, to put the matter baldly, and skewed toward the rich and powerful.

A new global political and economic order is emerging, the result of new economic realities. We cannot change these economic realities. But if we respond to them in the wrong way, we risk a backlash that will result in either a dysfunctional global system or a global order that is distinctly not what we would have wanted. □

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With *Silver Linings Playbook* and *American Hustle,* Bradley Cooper earned star status, now on display in the Broadway revival of *The Elephant Man.* But with *American Sniper,* opening this month, Cooper reaches a whole new dimension, playing navy SEAL Chris Kyle, who was murdered in 2013. BUZZ BISSINGER discovers what a huge challenge the role represented

HIS ELEPHA

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TRUNK SHOW

Tai, an Asian elephant, and Bradley Cooper. Along with starring in this month's *American Sniper*, the actor has made his return to the Broadway stage in *The Elephant Man*.

COOPER WEARS CLOTHING BY PRADA; BOOTS BY BOSS.

NT, HIS WAY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SAM JONES

Every day before going on location Bradley Cooper recited the six pages of exercises. They had been pieced together by his speech coach, Tim Monich, to further reinforce a Texas accent and dialect that Cooper knew, if it didn't come to him automatically, would rob all credibility. In a film such as this, and a role such as this, the most challenging of Bradley Cooper's career, there was no margin for error.

Don't get it right, don't do the movie. There are many Texas accents in Texas. This particular one, because of all the places the real-life character once lived, had parts West Texas and country Texas and home-on-the-range Texas, a little bit southern, a little bit western, a little bit shitkicker, with idiosyncratic inconsistencies, and yet poetic in its truncation.

Cooper started with the song "Feelin' Good Again," by Texas singer Robert Earl Keen. He did several variations of "Peter Piper" tongue twisters in dialect as fast as he could, like gargling while still enunciating.

Then the "thing" exercise: *There's nothin' you can do about innything a cat will or won't eat.* The "pin-pen" exercise: *I mean who the fuck does he thenk he is, the fuckin' Imperor of Kinya?* The "are" exercise: *You'll smoke a few cigars, play a little guitar, and you'll be like Hedy Lamarr.* The "git" exercise: *Now you git your guitar and git down to business.*

Bradley Cooper has shown remarkable range in his film career. He has been nominated for two Academy Awards. But there has always been something effortless about Cooper's performances, a testament to how good he is, but also the feeling that he never quite bleeds for them. As the director and his close friend David O. Russell observed, Cooper is used to not being taken seriously.

Whatever the reactions to his latest role, in *American Sniper*—directed by Clint Eastwood and opening in New York, Dallas, and Los Angeles on Christmas Day, before nationwide release on January 16—a lack of seriousness will not be among them. The subject matter alone, dark and deep and complex, makes that impossible. But maybe that is the problem. Maybe this particular role is too serious. Too out of his range.

All actors have a comfort zone. *American Sniper* is based on the best-selling book of the same name by navy SEAL Team Three sniper Chris Kyle, written with Scott McEwen and Jim DeFelice. Kyle served four deployments in the Iraq war and is credited with more confirmed sniper kills than any soldier in American history. The film is anything but comfortable. Not only does it portray Iraq's most dangerous hot zones with Kyle smack in the middle, it also balances Kyle's war experiences with his trying to adapt at home as a father to his two children and husband to his wife, Taya, played by Sienna Miller.

There is also the tragedy that, in the middle of the development of the project, Kyle—a national hero and military legend who had had a bounty placed on him by insurgents—was shot to death on February 2, 2013, along with another man, on a shooting range near Stephenville, Texas. Kyle had co-founded a nonprofit called FITCO Cares Foundation, which supplied at-home fitness equipment for emotionally and physically wounded veterans. He was 38 years old. The alleged shooter, an ex-Marine named Eddie Ray Routh, who had served several deployments and was said to be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, has been charged with capital murder. Kyle, according to reports, had taken Routh to the range at Rough Creek Lodge as a show of camaraderie. It was something he had done before.

Cooper had talked to Kyle on the phone, but he never had a chance to meet him in person. "The terrible beauty of the story is how he died and his death," Cooper tells me. "If you take that away, it's a much different story."

Cooper knew he had to reach a point where his belief in the role he was playing was absolute. To do that he had to inhabit it; learning the accent was only one of the requirements. "I have to believe it," Cooper says several weeks before the opening of the film. "If I believe it, then there's a chance you'll believe it. If I don't believe it, I'm fucked."

The best actors all risk failure. But the risk in Cooper's case is still enormous. Not in terms of career, which is thriving more than ever before, with not only *American Sniper* opening in December but also the Broadway revival of the Bernard Pomerance play *The Elephant Man,* in which Cooper plays the grotesquely disfigured John Merrick. But in terms of whether he can reach a new dimension in his acting career.

Whereas so many of his characters have been outward, manic in the midst of manic surroundings, this is a role that was almost com-

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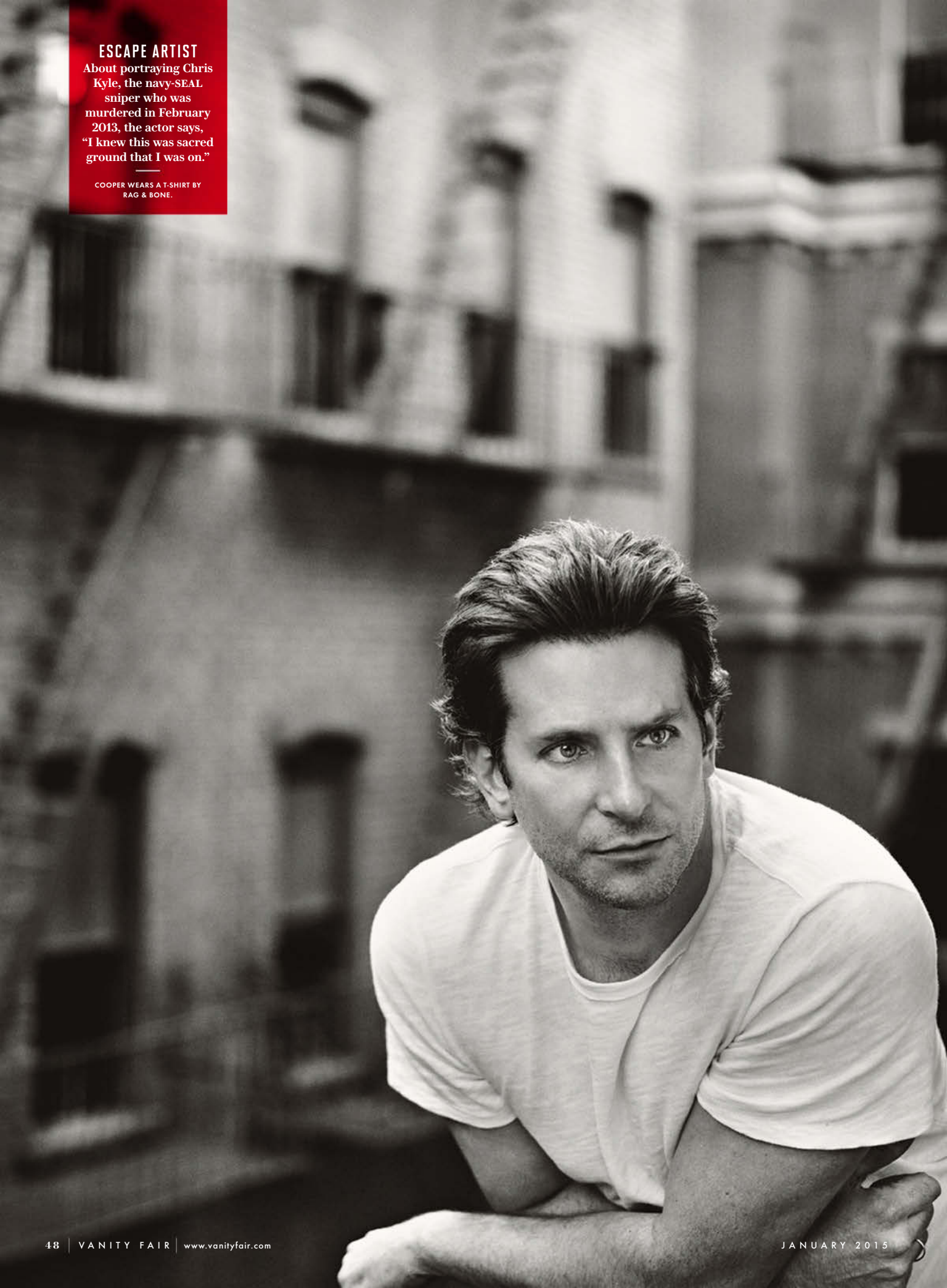
"HE HAS REALLY LIVED, BUT HE'S MANAGED TO HOLD ON TO HIS CHILD-LIKE INNOCENCE," SAYS SIENNA MILLER.



RAIN MAN

Clint Eastwood, who directs Cooper in *American Sniper,* says of the actor, "I see a lot of curiosity in him. I see a lot of my early self in there."

COOPER WEARS A COAT BY BRIONI, SUIT BY CANALI, SHIRT AND TIE BY GIORGIO ARMANI, SHOES BY TOD'S; UMBRELLA BY KINGSMAN.



ESCAPE ARTIST

About portraying Chris Kyle, the navy-SEAL sniper who was murdered in February 2013, the actor says, "I knew this was sacred ground that I was on."

COOPER WEARS A T-SHIRT BY RAG & BONE.

"I'M GOING TO HAVE TO . . . KNOCK SOME OF THE PRETTY OFF OF HIM," CHRIS KYLE SAID OF COOPER.

pletely inward, the tightening of his chin as important sometimes as anything he says. It has to be subtle, textured without histrionics.

So maybe he is fucked.

Philadelphia Story

Bradley Cooper turns 40 next month. He doesn't look it when you first meet him. There is a disarming boyishness. There are also those Coral Sea eyes that you try not to look at, because you know you will be immediately sucked into the vortex of his eminent and instant likability. He peppers his sentences, sometimes at the beginning and sometimes at the end, with the punctuation of "bro" and "dude" to the point where he should just trademark it.

Although a creature of Hollywood, he spends a significant amount of time in the Philadelphia region where he is from, still hanging out with friends (he calls them "buddies") he grew up with and went to school with, the home where he was raised in the suburb of Rydal—across the street from the movie theater—still in possession of the family. He grew up in comfort as the son of a Merrill Lynch stockbroker. He went to high school at one of the area's most prestigious private institutions, Germantown Academy.

He talks with wonderment about the first time he saw the David Lynch film *The Elephant Man,* at the age of 12—on a red couch in the living room, sobbing and in touch even at that age with the dignity and humanity of John Merrick—and knew he wanted to be an actor. He talks with similar passion about the Philadelphia Eagles and motorcycles. (He has five, and if you didn't nip it in the bud, he would still be talking about them.) His mind is one of those in a constant state of engagement, obsession over there, obsession over here, curious about this, curious about that. He loves food. He loves the combustion of family gatherings, with his mother's side of the family Italian and his father's side Irish.

He talks with quiet pain about the death of his father, Charles, at the unfair age of 71, in 2011. But also with quiet beauty, the "privilege" he felt as he cradled him in his arms one final time and felt his last breath. He wears the wedding ring that his father wore and Cooper never saw him take off.

When asked to describe his mother, he just laughs, the clear suggestion that she is one of those *sui philadelphius* characters thinking she is six feet tall when she is only five and tiny next to the frame of her six-foot-two-inch son. She is a ham. She is a vintage character.

He got those eyes from his father's Irish roots. He is obviously good-looking, but at a certain point in his career he was told after an audition that those casting the role had found him "not fuckable" (only in Hollywood . . .). His looks do not exude carnal sex appeal. But, as Russell observed, they have enabled him to "look leading-man-ish in a little bit of a Gary Cooper way" but also to "look weird," depending on the angle of the shot. Which has made the roles he has gotten, in particular under Russell—*Silver Linings Playbook, American Hustle*—more than one-dimensional hunkfests.

He has benefited from the considerable miles he traveled before stardom, the valley of addiction (he has been sober since 2004), the gnawing restlessness of a career not fulfilled, and the wrenching loss of his father after his horrible bout with lung cancer. They have given him experience and perspective, the equivalent in Hollywood of finding uranium underneath your table at the Ivy as you look for your napkin and wait for the egg whites.

"Losing someone close to me. Going through love and loss . . . knowing what's important," Cooper says. "Realizing that the bottom line is that all I got is me, so it's about time to stop trying to be something that I think you would want me to be. Or that would give me what I think I need. As you get older, thank God, your body deteriorates, but your soul sort of flourishes.

"I see life much more gray as I get older," he continues. "I was so sort of black-and-white in my late 20s. There's right and there's wrong and that's it. That's a tough way to live. . . . It's rare that I judge somebody, really rare. I think people feel that, so it's sort of easy to get close to somebody if you don't feel judged by them."

"Bradley isn't perfect," says Todd Phillips, who directed him in the *Hangover* trilogy, which catapulted him to stardom and a reported $15 million payday for 2013's final installment. "What I will say about Bradley is how evolved he is. I think it's because he's gone through a lot of stuff and a lot of struggle. People respond to that in different ways. The way he responds to that is by constantly evolving. He internalizes it in a way and turns it into evolution."

There is an I-still-can't-really-fucking-believe-it aura that suffuses him. "I think there is a part of him that can't believe this has quite happened . . . this boy from Philly," says Sienna Miller. "He can't quite see himself as the world sees him.

"He's been up and been down," she goes on. "He has really lived, for sure, but he also has managed to hold on to his child-like innocence. There's something about him that is very pure."

There seems to be nothing about Cooper that remotely reeks of actor imperialism. To get to rehearsal in Times Square for *The Elephant Man,* he took the subway. With the cap on his head ducked down and sunglasses and a backpack containing pumpkin soup, to lose the weight he had gained for *American Sniper,* he looked like a cross between somebody auditioning for a part on *Portlandia* and an overqualified courier who has been reading Proust since college.

He didn't participate much in drama at either Germantown Academy or Georgetown, where he graduated in 1997 with an honors degree in English. Nor did he brim with innate confidence. He played high-school basketball and was good at boxing out opponents with his self-described "big ass." But he never had the confidence to be the one to get the ball and take the shot. "I was too fucking nervous," he says. It did not begin to change until college.

He decided to apply to the master's program at the Actors Studio Drama School, in New York, almost as a lark. He had to audition, so he brought as his acting partner a professor from Georgetown who had no experience. The audition was doomed to imperfection. But James Lipton, who sat in on every applicant audition and was

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then the dean of the school, was drawn to Cooper's performance.

"It was imperfect, but I recognized something within him," Lipton says. "Something discernible . . . a kind of accessibility to himself." As well as a willingness to dare. "What do you like in an actor? My answer is one word: risk."

When Cooper, for his master's thesis, performed four scenes from *The Elephant Man* for a week, his mother took Lipton aside at one point.

"What do you think? Is he going to be all right?" she asked.

"'He's going to go all the way,'" Lipton responded. "I never predicted that for any other student."

He had no problems getting jobs after drama school. He had a recurring role on J. J. Abrams's *Alias,* played a gay camp counselor in the cult classic *Wet Hot American Summer,* and had a scene-stealing supporting role in 2005's *Wedding Crashers*. But something was not right in his late 20s. He devolved into alcohol and drugs. His friends would find him just waking up at two in the afternoon. He ignored his dogs when they needed to be walked. When he went out to dinner he talked only about himself. In August of 2004 he became sober, and he has stayed sober; in the physical transformation for *American Sniper* he refused to use any stimulants. "I did it naturally because I've been sober for 10 years and didn't want to do anything," he tells me. "I had a realistic conversation. Can I do this in three months naturally? Can I gain 30 pounds of fucking muscle? I didn't know if I would be able to do it or not. Thank God—luckily—my fucking body reacted fast."

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In 2006 he appeared in *Three Days of Rain* on Broadway with Julia Roberts and Paul Rudd. It was "an amazing opportunity" and also a pivotal point in his career. "If this doesn't work, then I'm not supposed to do this for a living," he told himself. He contemplated going back to school and getting a Ph.D. in English and teaching literature.

Roberts was the marquee, and the play did not get particularly good reviews. But Cooper had a sizable role that included a roughly 10-minute monologue. It sustained and energized him. A few years later came the same nagging sensation of lack of fulfillment.

"I always knew I wanted to be in the trenches with a director making the movie," he says. "I always felt that's what I'm supposed to be doing. I always knew deep down that if I'm not going to do that then I'm not too long for this business."

He turned to the theater again, this time in Williamstown, Massachusetts, starring in *The Understudy.* On the second-to-last day in Williamstown, he and other potential cast members got an e-mail from Todd Phillips. Six months earlier they had talked about a movie project called *The Hangover.* But then Cooper heard nothing. Until the e-mail.

"Let's do this already, bitches."

The role of Phil, dissolute and cool and careless but fundamentally a good man, launched him. Cooper also got his chance to be part of the process far beyond his own role, diving into the editing room; he displayed a willingness to drop a scene, no matter how good he had been, if he thought it slowed down the narrative. "It's why he is going to be a great filmmaker," says Phillips, and Cooper told me that the next stage of his career will be to direct.

Eastwood saw the same thing during the shooting of *American Sniper.* "He loves to participate," he told me. "He loves to know everything that is going on. He likes the whole process. I see a lot of curiosity in him. I see a lot of my early self in there."

"He'd be brilliant, but he'd be a nightmare [as a director]," said Sienna Miller, with the kind of laugh that doesn't CONTINUED ON PAGE 99

BELLES ON WHEELS

Albert Brooks. Julia Louis-Dreyfus. Larry David. The best comedic actors play broad and real simultaneously, coming across as both larger than life and all too human. Abbi Jacobson and Ilana Glazer pull off this same magic trick every week in *Broad City,* which returns for a 10-episode second season on Comedy Central in January. *Broad City*'s first season is full of moments that are insane . . . and yet make total sense. In one episode, Ilana whips off her shirt and bra to encourage onlookers to take out their cameras so Abbi can find her stolen phone. The shot of Ilana doing a weird topless dance in Central Park is "pause the screen" funny.

Thanks to their creators, Jacobson and Glazer, the characters Abbi and Ilana are believable and consistent. And what about offscreen—has success changed the two?

Jacobson: "Ilana has become pretty much a diva. She has a lot of assistants, but she doesn't know their names. . . . She never takes the subway anymore. She won't take the stairs. Not even an escalator. . . . And when someone doesn't recognize Ilana? She lets them have it."

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Glazer: "Abbi has changed. She has those sneakers with the wheels on the heels and now she only slides places. . . . And she also wears wigs. She shaved her head and she doesn't want to give *that* to America."

For the latest batch of episodes, Jacobson and Glazer helmed the writers' room and kept the focus on "day in the life" plots. The new season has "no big arc," says Jacobson, "but definitely some bigger stories and awesome guest stars." So, expect Abbi to screw up and Ilana to rant, and somehow it will all work out fine because they have each other.

—NELL SCOVELL

STYLED BY ALICIA LOMBARDINI; HAIR PRODUCTS BY SCHWARZKOPF; MAKEUP PRODUCTS BY VINCENT LONGO; NAIL ENAMEL BY LONDONTOWN; HAIR BY PATRICK MELVILLE; MAKEUP BY VINCENT LONGO; MANICURE BY RACHEL SHIM; SET DESIGN BY SHAWN PATRICK ANDERSON; FOR DETAILS, GO TO VF.COM/CREDITS

PHOTOGRAPH BY GAVIN BOND



Ilana Glazer and Abbi Jacobson, photographed in New York City.

GLAZER WEARS A SWIMSUIT BY MALIA MILLS; SHOES BY PAUL ANDREW. JACOBSON WEARS A SWIMSUIT BY TORI PRAVER SWIMWEAR; SHOES BY NICHOLAS KIRKWOOD. BOTH WEAR EARRINGS FROM HOUSE OF LAVANDE.



The WORDS *of* WAR

"Never such innocence again," Philip Larkin wrote in "MCMXIV," his iconic poem about World War I. The Great War changed many things and left legacies such as indirect fire, automatic weapons, a renewed German will. It also changed literary tradition, leaving modernism rising in its wake. A select set of writers who emerged from that conflict became celebrated for their gift of turning slaughter into poetry and prose. Now, a century on, there's an elegant echo: a new literature emerging from a new fight. Like their predecessors, these men are veterans, some having served multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan over multiple years. They grew up in war, so it's no shock they've decided to try to understand what it means. Homer said of war that "it would take a god to tell the tale," though of course it only takes a writer with God-given gifts. Here are six. They know one another. They know the canon to which they are contributing. And they respect, but don't mimic, their stylistic elders, from Wilfred Owen to Ernest Hemingway to Michael Herr. Though, as one of them, Elliot Ackerman, slyly puts it, "it might have been better to be part of the Lost Generation than the lost part of a generation."

Kevin Powers served with the U.S. Army in Iraq. Tom Wolfe called his debut novel, *The Yellow Birds,* an "*All Quiet on the Western Front* of America's Arab wars," and his first poetry collection was published this spring. Brandon Willitts, a navy veteran, co-founded Words After War to link veteran and civilian writers working on the topic of conflict. Matt Gallagher's memoir, *Kaboom,* chronicled his time in the armored cavalry in

PHOTOGRAPH BY JONAS FREDWALL KARLSSON



Maurice Decaul, Phil Klay, Elliot Ackerman, Kevin Powers, Brandon Willitts, and Matt Gallagher, at the White Horse Tavern, in Greenwich Village.

DECAUL WEARS JEANS BY LEVI'S. KLAY AND ACKERMAN WEAR SHIRTS BY RAG & BONE. POWERS WEARS A SWEATER BY RAG & BONE; JEANS BY LEVI'S. WILLITTS WEARS A SWEATER AND SHIRT BY RAG & BONE; JEANS BY GAP. GALLAGHER WEARS A SHIRT BY RAG & BONE; JEANS BY GAP; SHOES BY CONVERSE.

STYLED BY ALLAN KENNEDY; GROOMING BY ROBERT MEFFORD; FOR DETAILS, GO TO VF.COM/CREDITS

Iraq, and Atria will publish his novel, *Young Blood,* in 2016. Maurice Decaul enlisted in the Marines at 17 and is a poet, essayist, and playwright. Ackerman served five tours in Iraq and Afghanistan as a Marine special operator, was awarded a Silver Star, and writes about the Syrian civil war from Istanbul; his first novel, *Green on Blue,* will be published in 2015. And Phil Klay, a Marine public-affairs officer, published his debut story collection, *Redeployment,* last spring; war correspondent Dexter Filkins described it as "the best thing written so far on what the war did to people's souls." On November 19, it won the National Book Award.

A desire to write, like a desire to serve, is idealistic. Desires and ideals are worn lightly in this group, yet the guys are confident; they don't need their armor anymore. —LEA CARPENTER

THE WHICH BLAIR PROJECT

Once one of the most popular prime ministers in Britain's history, Tony Blair is now reviled at home for his role in the Iraq war and the lucrative consulting career he's built since leaving office. Delving into the byzantine world of Blair, Inc., which includes several philanthropic foundations, SARAH ELLISON sits down with the globe-trotting 61-year-old to discover how he reconciles his work for dubious regimes and big corporations with his aspirations to global leadership



PHOTOGRAPH BY JONATHAN BECKER



THE AFTERLIFE
Former British prime minister Tony Blair during a visit to Los Angeles, 2014.

I. The Pitch

The citizens of Kazakhstan celebrated the 20th anniversary of independence from the Soviet Union, which had been achieved in 1991, in a variety of ways. In December 2011, the country's president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, unveiled a model of the Arc de Triomphe in the Kazakh capital, Astana. At around the same time, but in a different spirit, oil workers occupied the central square in the western city of Zhanaozen, where they had been on strike for months to protest for higher wages and better working conditions. Kazakh police fired on the unarmed demonstrators, killing at least 15 and injuring scores of others.

Nazarbayev, with his authoritarian tastes, has been the president of Kazakhstan for as long as his country has been a country. His uninterrupted run has much to do with the fact that he has never held an election that met even the most forgiving international standards. To memorialize Kazakhstan's independence, in 2012 Nazarbayev appeared in a documentary. The 67-minute video, *In the Stirrups of Time,* opens with shots of Nazarbayev greeting his people interspersed with scenes of the sun rising over iconic Kazakh locales. Harp and piano play in the background.

The first recognizable person to appear on-camera, after Nazarbayev, is, to the uninitiated, an unlikely one. Two minutes into the documentary, former British prime minister Tony Blair materializes on the screen in suit and tie, against the backdrop of a white fireplace. Blair had been hired as a consultant to Nazarbayev two months before the Zhanaozen massacre, and during the first two years of his contract, according to the Kazakh media, he would be paid $40 million. The British press speculated that part of Blair's role was to help the Kazakh president secure the Nobel Peace Prize—an unlikely prospect. Blair's office has denied that Blair was involved in an attempt to secure a Nobel Prize for Nazarbayev; it has also said that the contract figures were wrong, and that the fees were used to fund Blair's charities. In the documentary, in what are clearly cherry-picked sound bites, Blair says that Kazakhstan "is almost unique, I would say, in its cultural diversity, in the way it brings different faiths together and cultures together." He finds the people of Kazakhstan to be "smart" and "capable" and "very proud" of their country. Other politicians appear in the film, but the camera returns to Blair again and again.

In the years since his movie appearance, Blair has continued to work for Nazarbayev. To help with the work, Blair hired Portland Communications, a firm run by his former media adviser, Tim Allan. Alastair Campbell, Blair's former press secretary, works for Portland as an adviser. Blair also facilitated a meeting in the summer of 2013 between Nazarbayev and the current British prime minister, David Cameron.

Watching Blair in Nazarbayev's documentary, one is reminded of a pitchman in a late-night infomercial. "If you look back over 20 years," Blair says at one point, "you have to say the progress is remarkable." Looking back over the past few years, you have to wonder how Blair the pitchman would assess his own progress. Various former associates cited a famous observation by the British politician Enoch Powell, that "all political lives, unless they are cut off in mid-


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WORLDWIDE WEB

(1) President George W. Bush and Blair after a 2001 press conference. (2) South Pavilion—Tony and Cherie Blair's country home, in Buckinghamshire—once owned by Sir John Gielgud. (3) The Blairs' home in London, on Connaught Square. (4) King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, of Saudi Arabia, left, with Tony Blair at Buckingham Palace, 2007. (5) Blair meets with Libya's Muammar Qaddafi, 2007, shortly before resigning as prime minister. (6) Blair with Henry Kissinger—one of "my role models."

PHOTOGRAPHS: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, BY MARIO TAMA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; JUSTIN LEIGHTON/UPPA/PHOTOSHOT/NEWSCOM; DAVID WIMSETT/UPPA/



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PHOTOSHOT/NEWSCOM, TOBIAS KLEINSCHMIDT/MSC, PETER MACDIARMID/EPA/NEWSCOM, GARETH GAY/ZUMA PRESS/NEWSCOM

stream at a happy juncture, end in failure, because that is the nature of politics and of human affairs." It's hard to imagine a politician who personifies Powell's statement more acutely than Tony Blair, who has gone from being one of the most popular prime ministers in Great Britain's history to being one of the most reviled figures in British public life. A man with aspirations to global leadership—even to global moral leadership—is now regarded by many of his countrymen as a shill for big corporations and deep-pocketed and dubious regimes. In terms of personal wealth, Blair is said to be worth an estimated £100 million ($150 million), a figure he denies. Today, Blair rarely makes public appearances in London. In 2010, he canceled a book party to celebrate the publication of his memoir, *A Journey: My Political Life,* to avoid the inevitable protests. Blair wasn't invited to the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton in 2011. Last January, a London waiter attempted a citizen's arrest of Blair for alleged war crimes arising from the invasion of Iraq.

Tony Blair was the youngest prime minister since Lord Liverpool in 1812. Unlike in America, where ex-presidents such as Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton have pursued prominent second acts after leaving office, in Britain, former prime ministers are expected to recede quietly into history. Margaret Thatcher and John Major both profited from consulting and speaking tours after they stepped down as prime minister, but neither made repeated pronouncements about public policy, as Blair routinely does. After he left office, Winston Churchill remained in Parliament as an ordinary backbencher until a year before his death, in 1965. Blair sees himself as pioneering something new: being the first prime minister who behaves like an American-style ex-president. In his pursuit of this role he has continued to weigh in on topics such as global terrorism and Iraqi politics. He has established a variety of philanthropic foundations. And, like Bill Clinton, he has set out to make some money, in his case aggressively pursuing business deals with autocratic governments around the world. Blair's view of this is that one must be pragmatic—better to engage with unsavory regimes, and maybe improve them a little, than not to do so at all. Better to take whatever money you can get with one hand, as long as you do good with the other. If you believe his motivations are pure, then he is trying to save the world by playing the role of a geopolitical Robin Hood.

It is an understatement to say that not everyone believes his motivations are pure. One man who does, however, is Tony Blair. I recently met with him in his office overlooking London's Grosvenor Square. The brick-and-stone town house is the same building John Adams occupied when he served as the first American ambassador to the Court of St. James's. When Blair introduced himself to me, his blue eyes and wide smile seemed to precede the rest of him. Everything else about the man has faded with age: the hair, the skin, and probably even the fabled torso, which once, while he was in office, was featured in a British magazine.

Blair wanted to put his years since leaving office into perspective, starting with what it's like to be suddenly out on the street. "You leave with nothing," he said. "The first thing you miss, I always say to leaders who are going out of office, the first thing you miss is the infrastructure. . . . You have to build it. You have to build that network of connections, and you have to work at it very, very hard. But then you have to have money to support it."

But support what? How would he sum up the current purpose of his life? He was silent for a full 10 seconds. Then he said, "Essentially, I'm trying to build an organization that is able to make a difference on the issues I care about." Those issues are faith and religious tolerance, plus good governance, particularly in developing countries in Africa. "Radical Islam is the key challenge we face today," Blair said, "and we don't yet understand its breadth and its depth and how dangerous it is. And one vital aspect of countering this threat is to educate people at an early age to respect the Other." He went on to talk about his Faith Foundation, and his Africa Governance Initiative. He said he spent roughly two-thirds of his time on his charities and on his work involving the so-called Quartet, which is a joint effort by the U.S., the European Union, Russia, and the U.N. to ease tensions between Israel and Palestine. The rest of his time was spent making money to pay for it all.

I asked Blair about the litany of criticism he faces, particularly in his own country, and especially about his business deals. Our conversation took place just a month before *The Sunday Times* in a front-page

story revealed the details of a secret Blair contract with the oil company PetroSaudi International, prompting even more criticism. Blair responded with a sigh that was meant to suggest resigned amusement and didn't quite succeed. "First of all, you know, I actually did win three elections, not lose them. I won the last election with a majority, even after Iraq." The criticisms of him, he said, are overstated by British newspapers. He observed that what he had long felt to be one of his positive qualities had often led to a negative result: "I have always been a centrist politician and I remain a centrist politician. And the center, in my view, still has the true governing constituency of the country but not the governing constituency of the media. The right don't like it because you used to win elections, and the left don't like it because they think you sold out. . . . It's multiplied because of the legacy of Iraq." He has heard all the criticisms before. If they bother him, as some of his former associates have said is the case, he betrayed no sign of it in our meeting. He was personable and without airs. As he threw one arm around the back of an armchair, settling in, he was clearly unapologetic. "Whatever criticisms people have of me," he said, "they've seldom thought of me as politically stupid."

II. "Now, Darling . . . "

Robert Harris lives in a Victorian vicarage in the town of Kintbury, in Berkshire. In the early 19th century, the vicarage was owned by a man whose son was engaged to Jane Austen's sister. A former journalist, Harris is now a best-selling novelist and something of an expert on empires. He is at work on the third novel of a trilogy about ancient Rome. He is also something of an expert on Tony Blair and would agree that Blair is not stupid. Harris is one of the best-known of Blair's former friends—a circle of disaffection that is quite large, and whose ranks include his former chancellor of the Exchequer and successor as prime minister, Gordon Brown; his former deputy prime minister, John Prescott; and the chairman of News Corp., Rupert Murdoch, whose newspapers helped deliver Blair to 10 Downing Street in the first place. Harris had written favorably about Blair in the years leading up to the 1997 campaign, during which he was given unique, behind-the-scenes access, but then he broke with Blair over his handling of—his enabling of, some would say—the Iraq war. Harris's novel *The Ghost* was made into the Roman Polanski film *The Ghost Writer.* It depicts a British prime minister—a thinly veiled Tony Blair—after he leaves office and hires a ghostwriter to collaborate on his memoirs. In due course, it is revealed that a covert C.I.A. spy in the household had manipulated the prime minister into doing the American government's bidding while in power. Of Blair's overall career trajectory, Harris says, "I have a sense of tragedy about the whole thing—almost in a classic Greek sense of someone who is brought down in a way by their own talents, their own quality, that subtly sets in process their destruction."

In 1997, Tony Blair, then 43, was swept into No. 10 Downing Street in an election landslide by winning the largest majority of any party since 1935. In his 2010 memoir, Blair characterized his time in office as a love affair between himself and the British electorate. In those years Bill Clinton was always calling. The Murdoch papers adored him. The young "New Labour" leader, with his lawyer wife, Cherie, ushered in the era of Cool Britannia. It was Blair in 2003 who made the case for war in Iraq with an eloquence that a tongue-tied President George W. Bush could not muster. A *Time* magazine story called Blair "the American Prime Minister."

As Iraq collapsed, so did Blair's stature. He had become known as "Bush's poodle" and, owing to statements by Blair that were at variance with what the truth turned out to be, "Bliar." He has already faced one inquiry, the Butler Review, which looked into the intelligence used to justify the Iraq war. (The review found some of the intelligence "seriously flawed.") Another, more thorough investigation, the Chilcot Inquiry, named after its chairman, the Right Honorable Sir John Chilcot, has been under way since Gordon Brown authorized it in 2009. Its much-delayed report, already called a "whitewash" by critics, will likely be released in 2015.

Harris told me that he got the idea for *The Ghost* while at a dinner at No. 10 in 2003 as he listened to Cherie Blair complain that Jacques Chirac, then the president of France, was behaving abysmally by not supporting the invasion of Iraq with sufficient enthusiasm. "Tony cut in and said, 'Now, darling, don't let's talk about the war.'" Harris says he later learned that Cherie had been calling members of Parliament, urging them to vote for the pro-war resolution. She was "potentially more belligerent" on the topic than Harris had realized, and she was quite influential with her husband. What finished Blair off with respect to his own party, Harris said, was the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, in 2006, when Bush and Blair were the only prominent international voices supporting Israel's actions.

Harris credits Cherie with boosting Blair's rise in the Labour Party: "He would never have become Labour Party leader without her." Cherie's father, Tony Booth, was a well-known actor, whose first wife, Gale Howard, was Cherie's mother. After their divorce, Tony's longtime companion was Pat Phoenix, the star of the British soap opera *Coronation Street.* Booth and Phoenix were both royalty in the Labour Party. "When Tony the son-in-law came looking for a seat, that certainly helped him a lot," Harris explained. Blair's own father, by contrast, was very much on the other side of the political divide. "One of the key things about Tony is that, in essence, he's a conservative," Harris observed. He ticked off the evidence: Blair's religious conversion (to Catholicism); his views of the role of the state (limited); his belief in interventionism (the Iraq war).

The 1999 NATO action against then Yugoslav president Slobodan Milošević's Serb forces in Kosovo, which Blair supported, made him a hero among ethnic Albanians, many of whom were being forced from their homes and even killed en masse. Blair was the most outspoken advocate of NATO action, even as then president Bill Clinton, along with other world leaders, remained reluctant to commit troops. (Albanian women did not forget, and in 2010, on a trip to Kosovo, Blair met a group of youngsters who had all been given the name "Tonibler.") Blair's support for Bush and the American effort in Iraq won him a Congressional Gold Medal—and he delivered what was effectively an acceptance speech before a joint session of Congress in July 2003. He received a standing ovation.

But that was in Washington. In 2004, Blair traveled to Libya for his famous "deal in the desert" with the country's longtime dictator, Muammar Qaddafi. The deal sparked outrage among the families of victims of the 1988 Lockerbie bombing, perpetrated by a Libyan terrorist who placed explosives on a commercial airliner and blew it up over Scotland, killing all 259 people aboard and 11 people on the ground. Following Qaddafi's renouncing weapons of mass destruction and support for terrorism, Blair agreed to normalize relations between the two countries. The negotiations eventually led to the release back to Libya of the man convicted for complicity in the Lockerbie bombing.

As the 2005 election in Britain approached, and with Blair's popularity declining, he and Cherie granted an exclusive interview to *The Sun,* arguably the most influential among Rupert Murdoch's publications there. Murdoch's support had always been crucial to Blair, but this

"WHATEVER CRITICISMS PEOPLE HAVE OF ME," BLAIR SAYS, "THEY'VE SELDOM THOUGHT OF ME AS POLITICALLY STUPID."

interview in particular was seen as a bald attempt to help Blair shore up votes. The three-page feature prompted derision for its discussion of the Blairs' personal lives. Cherie Blair at one point told her husband to "strip off" to demonstrate his upper physique. When asked by *The Sun* photographer if he was in good shape, Blair responded, "Very!" The photographer asked, "What, five times a night?" And Blair said, "At least." He added, "I can do it more depending how I feel."

Blair won a third term in office in 2005, albeit with his smallest majority. Shortly after he was elected, Blair acknowledged that Iraq had been "deeply divisive" but said that he felt Britain was ready to move on. The country did move on, very quickly—to the "cash for honours" scandal. (Several Labour supporters had been nominated to life peerages in the House of Lords, allegedly in return for large donations or loans to the Labour Party. No evidence was found to file charges.) It was a good time to depart and maybe try that ex-president thing. Blair resigned in June 2007 and left the government in the hands of Gordon Brown.

He did not return to Parliament, as most 20th-century prime ministers have. "One of the great paradoxes about Tony," Jack Straw, who served as Blair's home secretary until 2001 and then as his foreign secretary, told me, "is that he was extremely effective in the House of Commons, but never much liked the place. He was always clear that the moment he ceased to be prime minister, he'd cease to be in the House of Commons."

III. Complexity and Secrecy

A *Sunday Telegraph* analysis of Tony Blair's travels, compiled from public accounts of his movements and published in 2012, showed that, during a single 12-month period, Blair made 61 overseas trips totaling almost 224,000 miles—the equivalent, the newspaper noted, of traveling to the moon. In addition to working for Kazakhstan, Blair has reportedly established working relationships in Mongolia, China, the United Arab Emirates, Vietnam, Kuwait, Colombia, Brazil, Albania, Peru, South Korea, and Azerbaijan.

"Politicians are people who crave relevance," a former Blair associate told me. "You can't be a global superstar without money." Still, several former associates told me that it isn't an obsession with money per se that drives Blair. Rather, one said, his motivation is a compulsion for "doing stuff." Since leaving office, Blair has set up a formidable array of business and philanthropic ventures. Tony Blair Associates, housed in that Grosvenor Square office, handles a wide variety of government advisory contracts and investment deals. As noted, Blair also runs a number of charities. The Africa Governance Initiative—which receives funding from the Gates Foundation—and the Faith Foundation are both based in Marble Arch Tower, overlooking Hyde Park. The smaller and humbler Tony Blair Sports Foundation is based in Newcastle. Blair has also helped establish an organization focused on global warming, called Breaking the Climate Deadlock.

Blair's for-profit businesses exist under eight separate corporate entities, linked together in ways that require little disclosure about basic matters such as how much money they generate and how much money they spend. His for-profit work, which occurs largely through Tony Blair Associates, is financed through two main umbrella entities: Windrush Ventures and Firerush Ventures. Within those there are a total of six "structures," many of which do not report any meaningful financial information. From 2007 to early 2013, according to Bloomberg, these businesses took in about $90 million. But because of patchy disclosure requirements, these figures likely don't come close to encompassing the full revenue picture.

Since the Blairs moved out of Downing Street, their London residence has been a dark-brick town house with a mews house in back, on Connaught Square. Armed guards were milling around outside the day I walked by, as in fact they do every day. One neighbor joked, after the Blairs moved in, that the good news was that, given the security patrol, no one in the neighborhood would ever be mugged again; the bad news was that they might get bombed. The Blairs' country house, South Pavilion, a Queen Anne mansion in Buckinghamshire, was once the home of Sir John Gielgud.

The sources and extent of Blair's income are impossible to nail down. The directors' reports and financial accounts published on his Web site show only the financial statements of the two umbrella companies through which the operating costs of his global activities are paid. "They do not represent his earnings or the earnings or the profit of his businesses and are not referable to them," the Web site states. "They do not represent either the accounts of his charities or his donations to them." Blair recently told a gathering of supporters in London that "reports of my wealth have been greatly exaggerated. Just for the record, I read that I'm supposed to be worth £100 million. Cherie is asking where it is," he said, to warm laughter. He added that he wasn't worth "a half of that, a third of that, a quarter of that, a fifth of that. I could go on." This is a surprising claim, since the Blair family's real-estate holdings alone are reportedly worth about $47 million and encompass at least nine homes, including one each for Blair's three adult children. (A Blair spokesperson says that Blair's net worth is "roughly equal to what he has given away": about $15 million.)

The corporate structure of Blair, Inc., is complicated by design. Blair set it up with the help of KPMG, a tax-and-auditing firm, and of Robert Barnett, his Washington, D.C., lawyer and literary agent. Blair wanted confidentiality from certain forms of scrutiny—specifically from the media. The complex structure of the limited partnerships that house Blair's various for-profit businesses is "clearly not intended by British law, but it is possible under British law," according to Richard Murphy, an influential tax-and-accounting expert who runs his own consultancy, Tax Research LLP, in Norfolk, England. Blair's structure achieves "close to the secrecy he would have

achieved if he was outside the U.K. in a tax haven." As a result of these arrangements, no baseline public accounting exists that would outline how much money Blair's for-profit work generates. It is known that, taken as a whole, Blair's various operations employ roughly 200 people.

His most significant client is JPMorgan Chase, which reportedly pays Blair about $3 million a year. Blair appears at multiple corporate events for JPMorgan and acts as the head of the company's International Council, which means that he is essentially on call for high-level advice about global affairs wherever JPMorgan does business. "He will drop anything for them," one former Blair associate says. Blair does consulting work for Zurich Insurance Group, for which he receives an estimated $750,000 a year. He is also an adviser to Abu Dhabi's investment fund, Mubadala Development Company, which reportedly pays him about $1.5 million a year. Blair is currently looking to open an office in Abu Dhabi.

Blair had proved himself a skilled broker before leaving office. In 2007, when he was still prime minister, he made a trip to Libya in the company of Peter Sutherland, then the chairman of BP. At the time, officials traveling with Blair explained that BP had signed a nearly $900 million agreement to drill 17 oil wells in Libya. In advance of another of Blair's trips to Libya, in 2009, according to an e-mail obtained by *The Telegraph,* JPMorgan vice-chairman Lord Renwick, attempting to broker a deal between the Libyan Investment Authority and a Russian aluminum provider, encouraged an L.I.A. vice-chairman to come to London for a meeting "before Mr. Blair's visit to Tripoli."

Blair has repeatedly said that, upon leaving office, all he had were three employees and a few cell phones. The Blair political machine at 10 Downing Street had been feared and formidable. But the most talented and experienced members of that team did not join Blair in his new ventures. His famous spin doctor, Alastair Campbell, and his chief of staff, Jonathan Powell, struck out on their own.

For his first big consulting job, Blair turned to Kuwait. Blair had met the emir of Kuwait in 2007 and received him as a guest at 10 Downing Street. In 2009, Tony Blair Associates won a four-year contract with the Kuwaiti government worth a reported $40 million—this according to Jonathan Cook, a British journalist who has published a lengthy analysis of Blair's Middle East dealings in the *Journal of Palestine Studies.* The firm's government advisory work is to consult on "political and economic trends and governmental reform." Blair hired a team of consultants to live and work in Kuwait. They produced a report called *Kuwait Vision 2035,* outlining basic goals in areas such as health and education. But the price tag (which Blair's office said was overstated, without providing details) drew criticism in Kuwait from opposition ministers, academics, and newspapers. So did a report that Blair earned $1.5 million advising the royal family on various private matters.

Blair made headlines in the business press in 2012 for joining Qatari prime minister Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al Thani, a major shareholder in the mining giant Xsastra, and Glencore chief executive Ivan Glasenberg in an emergency meeting less than 24 hours ahead of a crucial shareholder vote that paved the way for a $66 billion merger between the two companies. Al Thani's vote of his Xsastra shares was crucial in allowing the deal to move forward. Blair reportedly made $1 million for three hours' work. Blair also tried to intervene on the Qatari prime minister's behalf to make a deal with Paddy McKillen, the Irish property developer, to buy the hotel group that owns Claridge's. The Barclay brothers, who own the Telegraph Media Group, eventually won control of the hotels.

Blair signed on in July 2014 to be a member of the Southern Corridor Advisory Panel, which includes CONTINUED ON PAGE 101

WHAT HAPPENS IN *VEGAS*… COMES TO BROADWAY

Broadway, Hollywood, and Las Vegas have been cross-pollinating for decades, so a show with roots in all three camps was probably inevitable—thus *Honeymoon in Vegas,* a new musical based on the 1992 film comedy about a young couple whose wedding plans are waylaid by a lovelorn gangster. The show opens in New York this month with Rob McClure, Brynn O'Malley, and Tony Danza re-creating roles played onscreen by Nicolas Cage, Sarah Jessica Parker, and James Caan. The book is by Andrew Bergman, who also wrote the movie, while Jason Robert Brown (*Parade, The Bridges of Madison County*) contributes songs that aim to find the sweet spot between vintage musical-comedy tunefulness and Rat Pack–style ring-a-ding-ding.

This all sounds nice. But what both you and I really want to know is: how does the stage show re-create the movie's most famous scene, where Cage's character, Jack, jumps out of a plane with a troupe of skydiving Elvis impersonators? "Well, I don't want to give it away," says the musical's director, Gary Griffin, who then gives it halfway away: "We found a stage trick for it, because we obviously can't literally do what's in the movie, so what we try to do is have some comic fun with your perspective. You really do see Jack jump out of the plane, and you do see him in the air a bit. The way they land is a trick we devised that uses our set. We thought, Why not have some fun with the fact that you're in a theater?" So it's not a *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark* situation, with the show's seven Elvises flying out over the orchestra seats, breaking their necks, and dropping on audience members? No, no, Griffin insists, none of that, though the Elvises' role has been expanded from the film, with their own musical number. That's the real magic of Broadway.

–BRUCE HANDY

STYLED BY FREDDIE LEIBA; COSTUMES BY BRIAN C. HEMESATH (BUSBY, JOSEFSBERG); HAIR PRODUCTS BY ORIBE (DANZA, MCCLURE); MAKEUP PRODUCTS BY EDWARD BESS; NAIL ENAMEL BY NARS; GROOMING PRODUCTS BY CAUDALIE; WIGS BY CHARLES G. LAPOINTE (BUSBY, JOSEFSBERG, O'MALLEY); MAKEUP BY JOANNE GAIR; MANICURE BY ELISA FERRI; GROOMING BY SARAH APPLEBY; SET DESIGN BY SHAWN PATRICK ANDERSON; FOR DETAILS, GO TO VF.COM/CREDITS

PHOTOGRAPH BY RUVEN AFANADOR



Honeymoon in Vegas co-stars Tony Danza, Brynn O'Malley, and Rob McClure, flanked by Elvis impersonators David Josefsberg and Barry Busby.

DANZA AND McCLURE WEAR CLOTHING BY MOSCHINO; SHOES BY SALVATORE FERRAGAMO. O'MALLEY WEARS A DRESS BY OSCAR DE LA RENTA; SHOES BY JIMMY CHOO; BRACELET BY KENNETH JAY LANE.



STYLED BY SOPHIE PERA; HAIR PRODUCTS BY R+CO; MAKEUP PRODUCTS BY CHANEL; HAIR BY OWEN GOULD; MAKEUP BY SERGE HODONOU; FURNISHINGS COURTESY OF FRAN LOMBARDI-REILLY

Something ABOUT ELLIE

After charming the world in *The Office*, *Bridesmaids*, and *21 Jump Street* (not to mention as the first-ever guest host of *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*), Ellie Kemper has scored her own sitcom, *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, created for her by Tina Fey and Robert Carlock. CURTIS SITTENFELD, who has known Kemper since college, reveals what lies behind that adorable image



Ellie Kemper, photographed in New York City.

KEMPER WEARS A DRESS BY MIU MIU; BOOTS BY STUART WEITZMAN.

AND ANNE DITTMEIER. OF THE SHOWPLACE ANTIQUE & DESIGN CENTER; PAINTING BY KATHRYN LYNCH; FOR DETAILS, GO TO VF.COM/CREDITS

PHOTOGRAPH BY CLAIBORNE SWANSON FRANK

Ellie Kemper is having a moment.

Back in her hometown of St. Louis, on the swank campus of the John Burroughs School, where Kemper attended grades 7 through 12 before graduating in 1998, the famously adorable actress is receiving a tour of the new performing-arts center from the headmaster. Most of the tour proceeds calmly—a few current students eye Kemper without comment—but eventually a girl in cowboy boots, a North Face coat, and a retainer approaches to apologetically announce what a huge fan she is. Kemper cheerfully engages the girl—"one redhead to another," as Kemper puts it—and soon the actress has been swarmed, mostly by bright-eyed, long-haired girls in leggings. "Hi, you're awesome," one says. "Are you and Channing Tatum friends?" asks another. A third simply declares, "I love you!"

There's a way of being pleasant but not encouraging, and this isn't the tack Kemper takes. Chatting with the teens, she goes well beyond mere politeness—she listens, she asks *them* questions, and she pretty much implies there's nowhere she'd rather be than right here. But Kemper might need to learn to move things along a bit, because she appears to be on the cusp of having many more versions of just such moments.

After several years endearing herself to viewers in ensemble or supporting roles—spending five seasons on NBC's *The Office* as bubbly receptionist Erin Hannon; yukking it up as one of the *Bridesmaids* bridesmaids and then as a teacher in *21 Jump Street* (for the record, Channing Tatum "couldn't be nicer"); and subbing in January 2014 as the first guest host in the 10-year history of *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*—Kemper, 34, is now stepping into the spotlight. For the new sitcom *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt,* which is slated to debut on Netflix in March, Tina Fey and her writing and producing partner Robert Carlock tapped Kemper to be the titular Kimmy: a woman who emerges from 15 years in an underground bunker (and an Indiana doomsday cult), learns that the world has not, in fact, ended, and embarks on a new life in New York City.

Fey and Carlock created the character of Kimmy around Kemper, whom Fey was familiar with from watching *The Office*. "My first impression was *That girl's funny, but maybe she's too pretty to be on* The Office," Fey says. "But she grew on me because she's good at downplaying her prettiness." When NBC Entertainment chairman Robert Greenblatt floated the idea of developing a show for Kemper, Fey and Carlock were intrigued. (The show moved from NBC to Netflix, with a two-season commitment, in November.)

A few months later—a stretch during which, Fey says, "my job was to think about Ellie, and it was a lovely job"—a pilot script existed. Kemper says with a laugh, "In my eyes, it happened very quickly and seamlessly, because I wasn't the one writing it."

Though Kemper has risen to prominence playing versions of her warm and impeccably polite self, she's much savvier than her public image or any of her roles so far—which I can say with confidence because (full disclosure) I've known her since the late 90s, when she and my sister Jo became college roommates. I wholeheartedly agree that Kemper is adorable: she refers to Tina Fey as T.F. instead of Tina because she doesn't want to seem name-droppy, she avidly shops at T. J. Maxx and Marshalls (and chided me for not complimenting her on the $860 Kate Spade coat she got for around $100), she says she regularly wets her pants from laughing too hard, *and* she bears a striking resemblance to Strawberry Shortcake. But if I were to pinpoint Kemper's most marked characteristic, I'd say it's her awareness of others, her precise attunement to their personalities and moods. And you don't have to have slept on a futon in her dorm room in 2001 (though I did) to figure out she has an edge, of the good variety—Google either "Some Relatively Recent College Grads Discuss Their Maids," which is a scathing class takedown she wrote for the *McSweeney's* Web site in 2007, or a 2013 TEDx talk she gave in St. Louis, in which she likened the question of whether women can be funny to the distractingly "hot, sour, stale" bad breath of a co-worker at a cocktail party. "Yes, some women are funny," she said, and "no, some women aren't funny. It's similar to how some women are tall and, you know, some women are short."

According to Fey, *Kimmy Schmidt* will highlight Kemper's gifts beyond sheer adorability: physical comedy, timing, acting skills. "What she has is this natural sunniness and up energy and pleasant nature, but you also know that there's a strength and intelligence behind it," Fey says. "We haven't seen her carry a show yet, and I think she's very well equipped to."

Although Kimmy and Kemper share a midwestern charm, there are some rather significant differences, too. Kemper is the second of four children of a bank-chairman-and-C.E.O. father and a Princeton University graduate turned stay-at-home mother, both of whom happen to be very funny. Born in Kansas City, Kemper moved to St. Louis with her family when she was five.

Kemper thrived at Burroughs, and, in one of those magical coincidences almost too delightful to be true, as a ninth-grader she took an improv class with Burroughs alum and then recent college grad Jon Hamm. Though Kemper allows that Hamm "wasn't ugly," she says

TO BE AS ADORABLE AS ELLIE KEMPER ACTUALLY REQUIRES A LOT OF EFFORT.

she didn't have a crush on him, because she was 14 and he, at age 23, seemed old. "He wasn't in *Mad Men* at the time, so it wasn't like anyone was starstruck," she says. "I remember him being very serious about teaching." Returning the praise, Hamm wrote in an e-mail that Kemper "was a preternaturally confident and prepared student. She was easily one of the youngest (and smallest) in the class, but on stage was clearly miles ahead in confidence and ability."

While the advantages of a charmed childhood are undeniable, Kemper also has long shown a capacity for hard work. Soon after graduating from Princeton with a degree in English, she settled in New York and spent her 20s paying her professional dues: interning for *Late Night with Conan O'Brien;* appearing in commercials (including for Wendy's and Kmart); participating several nights a week in improv shows; and writing, sometimes with a partner, her own shows, humor pieces for *McSweeney's,* and headlines that she'd submit to *The Onion.* (She sent in about a hundred before making *The Onion*'s front page—and $100—with GRAPES BIG HIT AT AREA PICNIC. Another success was DOG IN PURSE STARES LONGINGLY AT DOG IN YARD.)

Kemper's acting break came with what was intended to be a four-episode arc on *The Office* in the spring of 2009. By that June, she'd signed a contract to be a regular for the following season and soon moved from New York to L.A. (With *Kimmy Schmidt* filming in New York, Kemper now divides her time between an apartment in the West Village and a house in Los Feliz.)

"It definitely felt like *The next stage has started,*" Kemper says of that first sitcom job. "The idea of watching *The Office* and then being on it felt like a huge leap." When Will Ferrell guest-starred as Steve Carell was leaving the show, Kemper had a scene in which the men gave her character conflicting orders about how to answer the phone. "I had to look from Steve Carell's eyes to Will Ferrell's eyes, back and forth, to determine who I should listen to," Kemper says. "I was like, Oh my gosh, what is happening? These are two of the funniest men on the planet—and this is a job?"

In 2010, Kemper's younger sister Carrie became an *Office* staff writer. Carrie now writes for HBO's *Silicon Valley,* but during their *Office* days the two often ate lunch together. In an e-mail, Kemper recalled, "Sometimes she would beat me to my trailer for lunch, and our security guard, Joseph, would warn me: 'Your sister is in there, don't be scared!'"

More female bonding occurred with *Bridesmaids,* though Kemper says she had no idea that it would become the phenomenon it ultimately did. At the Los Angeles mansion where the bridal-shower scene occurred, the actresses—Kristen Wiig, Maya Rudolph, Melissa McCarthy, Rose Byrne, and Wendi McLendon-Covey—spent their downtime sitting on a lawn, drinking Diet Sunkist in the heat, and chatting about "nothing of any grave importance," Kemper says. "People would do funny voices, but not in an obnoxious way. I kept thinking, When are Maya and Kristen gonna pull out the *S.N.L.* stories? But there really was not much of that." The shoot, she adds, "was so lovely because there was no ego and everyone was cooperative." Released in May 2011, *Bridesmaids* achieved its juggernaut status gradually and ultimately grossed $288 million worldwide.

The success of *Bridesmaids* lent a meta aspect to Kemper's planning of her own wedding, to comedy writer Michael Koman, in 2012. Kemper and Koman had met on the set of *Conan O'Brien*—"I was an old intern, and he was a young writer," she says of Koman, who is three years older—and had been friends first. "There was a part of me that was like *No time for love!*" Kemper recalls. "*I have to focus on my career!*" When they did have a conversation about whether they should be a couple (Kemper claims not to remember who was arguing for which side), it resulted in two months of silence between them. Then Kemper received an e-mail from her mother asking, "Is Michael O.K.?" Koman had called in sick to work, and Conan O'Brien had, as part of his show, done a sketch that involved visiting Koman's apartment to see if he really was under the weather. "Let's be honest," Kemper says. "I think he probably had a sore throat. But it prompted me to call."







FUNNY GIRL *Left,* Kemper, aged three, at home in Kansas City, Missouri. *Above,* with Ed Helms in Season Nine of *The Office. Right,* in the upcoming NBC comedy *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt.*

@vf.com TO SEE VIDEO FROM THE SET, GO TO VF.COM/JAN2015.

A practicing Catholic, Kemper married Koman at New York's Church of the Blessed Sacrament—and, yes, she invited the other *Bridesmaids* actresses. Kristen Wiig and Rose Byrne attended, and they all sent gifts from her Williams-Sonoma registry: "There were some wineglasses in there and, like, All-Clad pans."

Just as the enchantment of a wedding rests, as anybody who has ever planned one knows, on a foundation of logistical grunt work, to be as adorable as Ellie Kemper actually requires a lot of effort. Fey remembers being impressed with Kemper's discipline during the shooting of the pilot. In a flashback, Kemper confronts the cult leader with evidence contradicting his claim that everything in the world has died except them: a rat she found while cleaning out an air filter.

"I think it was about two o'clock in the morning when we shot it," Fey recalls. "To go in there having to deal with playing the scene, dealing with a rat wrangler, and holding a rat, she had this very specific stillness and calm between takes. A lot of people would have been like [whiny voice], *I don't like it!* Or made a big show of how great they were doing handling the rat. And she was just so precise and all-business take after take. Her calmness made the rat calm." Fey, who, it's safe to assume, knows a little something about how much work can go into entertaining people, laughed. "It was extremely professional." □

PHOTOGRAPHS: CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT, COURTESY OF THE KEMPER FAMILY; BY CHRIS HASTON/NBCU PHOTO BANK/GETTY IMAGES; ERIC LIEBOWITZ/NBC



She may be the world's most powerful woman, but German chancellor Angela Merkel has governed with the utmost caution—one of several contradictions that make her an enigma at home and abroad. After a year that forced Merkel into confrontations with Putin and Obama, MAUREEN ORTH explores how a once frumpy physicist has led her reluctant country to new prominence on the global stage

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOCK FISTICK

ANGELA'



DEEP FOCUS
Angela Merkel shares a moment with then French president Nicolas Sarkozy during a European Council meeting, in Brussels, March 13, 2008.

S ASSETS

As the old Market Church bells tolled in Hannover last October 3 on German Unity Day, commemorating Germany's re-unification, Angela Merkel walked briskly over the cobblestones and paused at the entryway of the church to greet a few members of a children's choir, dressed untraditionally in red sweatshirts and black pants. She herself was in her chancellor-of-Germany uniform: a brightly colored jacket, simple necklace, black pants, and low heels. She had TV pancake makeup on, but her sensible-matron look—cropped, softly colored blond hair, little lipstick—is always carefully calibrated to appear as if she were wearing no makeup at all. Only a couple of security guards could be seen anywhere in the church; there was no fanfare like the playing of "Hail to the Chief," and, going up the aisle, she did not pause to shake hands with any of the congregation of 1,200 religious leaders, dignitaries, and diplomats. To think that only 25 years ago Angela Merkel was a divorced 35-year-old East German physicist specializing in quantum chemistry, who was not allowed to set foot in West Berlin and had never uttered a political opinion in public, was a striking affirmation of both the ability of Germany to recover and her own ability to succeed.

After nine years of her rule, however, many Germans still see her as from the East, not really one of them. They understand that as Merkel plays an ever enlarging role in the world—going head-to-head with Putin, charming China, exasperating and infuriating her European Union partners with her unyielding demands—she, who wants nothing to do with being seen as a "female" leader, has become The Man striding across the global stage. But, even so, Germans seem puzzled by Angela Merkel.

"She came as an outsider and she stayed an outsider," Ines Pohl, editor of the Berlin alternative daily, *Die Tageszeitung,* commonly known as *Taz,* told me. "She's spooky, because how can she manage all these things? She's not really a woman you can love—admire and be proud of, yes. But you always feel her killer instinct."

"She governs by silence," says Dirk Kurbjuweit of *Der Spiegel,* who wrote a 2009 biography of Merkel. "It's her biggest advantage and disadvantage. She never says something fast. She waits and waits to see where the train is going and then she jumps on the train. Part of this she learned in the G.D.R. [Communist East Germany]. She knew she had to watch her words—there's nobody better at [vague] words than Angela Merkel."

She is often referred to as the world's most powerful woman, although those in Merkel's immediate circle will fix you with looks of utter disdain for even bringing up such a concept. "That's done for media lists—it has no meaning," an official close to her told me. In fact, 25 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Germans instinctively recoil at the idea of being powerful because that presumes responsibility on a global scale that they do not yet seem ready to take. The older generation still remembers the ravages of Hitler and the Third Reich, and the younger generation has grown up under the defense umbrella of the U.S. and NATO, which has been in place for nearly 70 years.

"Germans are just coming out of a phase where they didn't see the world the way it was—now they are half in and half out," former U.S. ambassador to Germany John Kornblum, who has lived in Germany for more than 40 years, told me. "Merkel is very smart and she is trying to manage these illusions while not losing elections."

In Germany's parliamentary system, Merkel is head of the center-right Christian Democratic Union party (C.D.U.). A year into her third term, she governs in a grand coalition with the center-left Social Democratic Party (S.P.D.), many of whose programs she has appropriated as her own, outflanking them at every turn and leaving little to debate. "We are a democracy," Kurbjuweit says. "Government needs fights and arguments. We have none anymore." *Der Spiegel* recently revealed that between 2009 and 2013 Merkel commissioned 600 secret public-opinion polls on the German electorate's feelings. These are what often guide her actions.

Merkel has the added advantage that her predecessor, Gerhard Schröder, instituted a number of unpopular structural reforms of the welfare state—giving management more leeway in laying off employees and streamlining various government benefits—that probably cost Schröder the 2005 election that saw Merkel come to power. Ironically, these reforms now allow Merkel to lecture other E.U. countries about their structural lassitude: the E.U. has only 7 percent of the world's population but 50 percent of the world's social spending. "All the reforms she has demanded from Greece, Italy, and Spain, she would never, ever, ever ask the German people to do, not remotely," says Mariam Lau, another Merkel biographer, who is a political correspondent for *Die Zeit.* "I asked her, 'How do you imagine the German voter out there?' She always said, 'People are afraid—the economy might not hold, their jobs might not be there.' She thinks of her voters as risk-averse, anxious, and nervous."

Two recent polls illuminate this. In one, 60 percent of the German people said that Germany should continue to exercise restraint

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"YOU ALWAYS FEEL HER KILLER INSTINCT," ONE BERLIN EDITOR SAYS.



1



2

SHE'S THE MAN

(1) The Chancellery building, Berlin. (2) Merkel meets Koni, Vladimir Putin's dog, in Sochi, 2007. (3) Merkel, then secretary-general of the C.D.U., in Bonn, 1999. (4) Merkel's office at the Chancellery. (5) Merkel and German president Joachim Gauck cheer Germany's World Cup–final victory over Argentina in Rio de Janeiro, 2014.



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5

in foreign policy. In another, 43 percent said if they ever had to buy anything on credit they'd be embarrassed.

"She's very popular among the German people, but she doesn't appreciate the German people so much. She doesn't have much trust in them," says another biographer, Ralph Bollmann, of *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* the leading conservative daily. "She had an enthusiastic image of the state of West Germany, that the people were very dynamic there, were oriented to compete; it was a long and hard process to learn that Germans are not like that." According to Bollmann, the chancellor treats the German electorate—which recently gave Merkel a 74 percent approval rating—"as if they were children." Her nickname in Germany is Mutti, or Mommy. (A sticker on a litter can outside my Berlin hotel said, "Be careful. Mutti is watching you.")

Thus, her mantras: There are no problems, but rather "tasks" to be resolved using the scientific method of imagining every possible outcome. Take small steps. Explain very little. "For me, it is always important that I go through all the possible options for a decision," Merkel said in a TV interview last summer. The process is rigorous. Merkel, adept at rapid texting, sits in Germany's Parliament, the Bundestag, say observers, and frequently texts to an exclusive network of informal advisers who feed her information during the proceedings. (Her tight inner circle is led by two women, known as the "girls' camp.") After meticulously making a decision, Merkel then must decide how much "reality" she can spoon out at a time to her ever wary country.

After the Unity Day church ceremony, the diplomats and religious heads boarded buses to Hannover's Neues Rathaus (New City Hall) to watch a nationally televised commemoration devoted to diversity and the voices of immigrants—a hot topic, since a few days previously smartphone pictures and videos had emerged of two asylum seekers who were abused in a German refugee center. Merkel's speech was far more direct than usual, observers told me. I thought it might have even been stirring had she not raced through its delivery in a monotone, but it sounded as if she was laying the groundwork for Germany to become more involved in the world.

Barely looking up from the page and not using a teleprompter, Merkel said the threat of terrorism was "a challenge to the entire world—not just the U.S.A., not just the Arab states of the region," and the battle against it was in "Germany's interest. Jihadists threaten our security here as well. That is why we take up our responsibility, together with our partners and allies." Merkel mentioned that the German military is involved in 17 different international missions, including humanitarian. To an American audience used to exalted talk of making the world safe for democracy and global leadership, the speech would have sounded like complete boilerplate, but to the Merkel tea-leaf readers at the diplomatic reception afterward, there was a definite buzz in the air, as if the chancellor had just given Germany the go-ahead to wake up—slowly, cautiously, meticulously—after seven decades of slumber.

"Did you just hear what I heard?" a high-ranking staff member of the German government asked the current U.S. ambassador, John Emerson. "The times they are a-changing."

In her Unity Day speech Merkel had quoted a German newspaper calling 2014 "a year of pestilence, war, and terror." Indeed, the past year has hit Merkel like a ton of bricks. For someone who prefers to rule by baby bites, Merkel has had a great deal on her plate.

By the time she had won her third term, in September 2013, Merkel had already stubbornly maneuvered the euro crisis to Germany's will, demanding, in exchange for not overly generous bailouts, painful structural reforms of the spendthrift South—Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy—and Ireland. She made few friends along the way. The Greeks even waved placards of her with a Hitler mustache. But the German economy, the richest in the Eurozone, seemed to be purring, if not exactly roaring. During her 2013 campaign, Merkel said that by 2015 Germany would have a balanced budget—"black zeros"—for the first time since 1969, and even today she still insists she will not back down from that pledge; she will not go into deficit spending to stimulate the German economy despite two consecutive flat quarters of growth in 2014 and ominous warnings of recession and stagnation in Europe. Germany's recalcitrance with regard to stimulating its own economy has been a continuing thorn in the side—if not a source of outright rage—to markets worldwide.

On the security front, when the Iraq war began, in 2003, Germany refused to be part of the Coalition of the Willing. It also markedly abstained from voting in the U.N. Security Council to join the U.S. in its late bid to intervene in Libya in 2011. It did, however, send 3,000 troops to Afghanistan, where about 800 will remain. For years, though, the euro crisis, with Merkel ultimately calling the shots for all 28 member nations, was the major international story for Germany: America's relationship with Germany had shifted from being a security-based relationship to a largely economic one.

But 2014, the year Merkel turned 60, changed all that. It brought the crisis in Ukraine, which saw Merkel—not Barack Obama—become the point person in the transatlantic alliance for dealing with Putin; the continued diplomatic fallout from the National Security Agency's infamous tapping of Merkel's cell phone, followed by the revelation that the C.I.A. was attempting to recruit spies in the German government; and the war in Gaza, which sparked incidents of German anti-Semitism, causing Merkel to send police to guard synagogues. By early fall Germany had to contend with the news that an estimated 500 ISIS jihadists had grown up in Germany. For the first time in its postwar history, Germany pledged to send weapons to a foreign country, in this case to Kurdistan in order to help the Kurds fight ISIS on the Syrian border.

Merkel's Unity Day speech gave voice to these examples of Germany's broadening engagement all over the world. But she omitted the embarrassing fact that the first shipment of weapons—symbols of the country's willingness to demonstrate its military preparedness and to take on greater challenges—had been delayed when the military plane scheduled to transport it broke down, leading to further reports describing the "shocking state of disrepair of Germany's military hardware."

Back in the G.D.R.

Twenty-five years ago, when the Berlin Wall fell, on November 9, 1989, Merkel took her regular Thursday-night sauna. She did not immediately accompany the elated throngs of East Germans tearing down the wall and breaking through. "When I came back out with my sauna bag," Merkel recently told a group of high-school students in Frankfurt, "I saw how people were running along the street. What happened then I will never forget; it was perhaps half past 10 or 11 at night—I just started following the crowd. Grandparents were dragging their grandchildren, and the grandchildren did not even know what was happening to them." She and a small group landed in a nearby apartment on the other side of the wall. After phoning an aunt who lived in West Germany and drinking one beer—"I remember it came in a can which was not familiar to me"—she called it a night, even though it was such an historic one. "I had to work again early the next morning and was an orderly person," Merkel explained.

THE PAST YEAR HAS HIT MERKEL LIKE A TON OF BRICKS.

Merkel was also an insatiably curious person and a secretly avid follower of West German politics. She often fantasized about the West. She and her mother, Herlind Kasner, had a pact that if they could ever freely travel to West Berlin they would go to the famous Kempinski hotel and eat oysters. "Back then I knew exactly what I was going to do at 60—go to the police station here in the West. That's where you gave them your G.D.R. passport, get a West German one, and then you could travel to America. That was my clear plan. But then it all came to pass a little earlier."

Angela Merkel's father, Horst Kasner (nicknamed "Red" for his political beliefs), raised his and Herlind's three children to be very tight-lipped. "Her father frequently said, 'Don't tell your colleagues or your teachers at school what is spoken at our table,' " says Dirk Kurbjuweit. A Lutheran minister with lifelong anti-capitalist views, Kasner had brought his wife and the two-year-old Angela from the West to live in East Germany. "He was a striking character, very opinionated but also open-minded," says his longtime neighbor Werner Foth, who taught English at the high school Angela graduated from in 1972 before heading to Leipzig University to study physics, eventually earning a doctorate in 1978. "He loved discussions and arguing." Kasner was the head of a seminary that trained ministers to be administrators and also educated 200 mentally and physically handicapped people who boarded at Waldhof, the compound where Angela grew up, outside the small rural town of Templin, 44 miles north of Berlin. She has a younger brother, Marcus, and sister, Irene, the baby of the family. Her widowed mother, now 86, still lives in Templin and gives adult English classes; she was not allowed to teach under the Communists.

Templin today is picturesque and immaculately kept, with large pieces of the original city walls, constructed in the year 1300, still intact. Only a few unrestored houses suggest how dreary and ugly it must have been during the 41 years Templin was part of East Germany and everyone was constantly looking over his or her shoulder in fear of the regime and its henchmen, the Stasi. In addition, thousands of the Soviet Union's Red Army soldiers were stationed at a nearby base. Religious families like the Kasners were automatically suspect under an atheistic government, yet Angela's intellectual father was determined his three children should have university educations. That was not going to be easy unless one got along with those in power.

"Kasner made his arrangements with the state so that his children could get ahead," charges Ulrich Schöneich, the former mayor of Templin. Schöneich was also the child of a minister, but he was not allowed to attend a pre-college high school, as Angela and her brother were. According to Schöneich and other sources, Angela joined the official Communist youth organization Free German Youth. Marcus, at age 14, went as far as to undergo the *Jugendweihe* ("youth consecration ceremony"), a kind of Communist Bar Mitzvah meant to be the "atheist replacement" of Lutheran confirmation, an act that, Schöneich said, shocked their religious community. Angela—well liked for helping other students—and Marcus both got straight A's. "She could do everything but gym and singing," Wolf Donath, her math teacher for four years and principal of the high school, told me.

Merkel's notorious caution had already manifested itself. During swimming class one day, she stood at the edge of the high diving board at the Templin pool looking down for 45 minutes, until just before the class bell rang. Then she finally took the plunge. That hesitation was not unlike her waiting, in 2008, until 15 minutes before the markets opened in Tokyo to rescue an ailing German bank in order to avoid a domino effect that could have been catastrophic to the German economy.

After the collapse of the East German regime, in 1989, Merkel joined one of the political civic groups forming in the East, Democratic Awakening, then volunteered for the campaign of Lothar de Maizière, who became the G.D.R.'s only democratically elected prime minister, in 1990. After college, Merkel had been the secretary for agitprop in the Free German Youth, a post she claims was basically about organizing events. At any rate, she soon became de Maizière's deputy government spokeswoman. After de Maizière signed the unification treaty, on May 18, 1990, which would put Helmut Kohl—who had served since 1982 as West Germany's chancellor—in charge of the entire country, he joined Kohl's right-of-center Christian Democratic Union and took Merkel with him. De Maizière was soon forced to resign from the C.D.U., after reports surfaced that he had been a Stasi informer.

In the conservative C.D.U., Merkel was certainly an outlier. She had abruptly divorced her first husband—a fellow physics student, Ulrich Merkel—in 1982, after five years of marriage. She became involved with another scientist, Joachim Sauer, the father of two sons, who got a divorce from his wife of 16 years. The C.D.U. was heavily Catholic, and many of its members expected women to stay home and care for the kids; they often considered women who worked as *Rabenmütter,* after the female raven, who abandons her chicks in the nest, and they frowned on cohabitation before marriage. Nevertheless, in 1990, the C.D.U. found a safe seat in the Bundestag for the divorced, childless, Lutheran, East German Merkel, and she holds it to this day. Back then, old-school pol Kohl, big and effusive, famously referred to Merkel as *mein Mädchen,* "my girl." It didn't take much to notice her brilliance. It was the intensity of her ambition these men later found surprising.

Thanks to Kohl's patronage, Merkel rose through the C.D.U. ranks. Kohl appointed her minister of women and youth in 1991, after taking her aside at a reception and asking her if she got along with women. Recently released confidential tapes of Kohl reveal his saying that in the beginning Merkel "couldn't eat properly with a knife or fork" and "loitered around" state dinners. Nevertheless, Kohl brought her to the United States, where she got to meet her girlhood hero, Ronald Reagan. As an East German, Merkel had loved his tough talk on the Soviet Union. An American official who got to know her well during that time found her to be warm, CONTINUED ON PAGE 107



Alvin Ailey dancers—and husband and wife—Linda Celeste Sims and Glenn Allen Sims, at the Ailey Studios, New York City.

ALL CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR BY BOTTEGA VENETA.

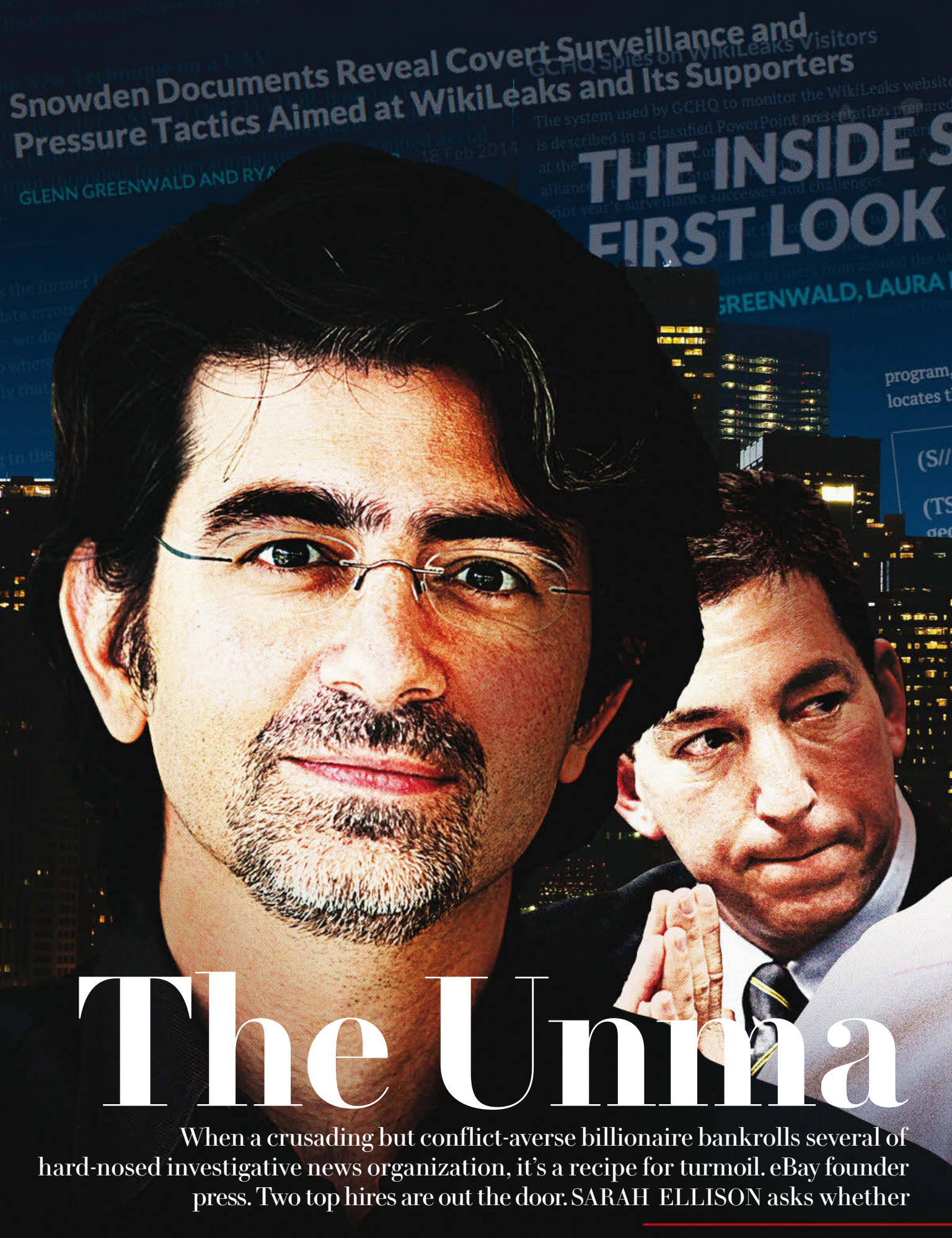


An AFFAIR *of the* ART

Come Christmas, New York dance-lovers have three traditional choices: the Rockettes, George Balanchine's *Nutcracker,* or Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. About 70 percent of the Ailey programs include *Revelations,* the late choreographer's gospel masterpiece, of which a high point is "Fix Me, Jesus," the pas de deux danced most frequently by Glenn Allen Sims and his wife, Linda Celeste Sims. Linda, a New Yorker, joined the 32-member company in 1996; Glenn, from New Jersey, started a year later; and they were married in 2001, on January 5, Ailey's birthday. They have performed "Fix Me, Jesus" nearly 2,000 times, and they have been cast in some 130 of the troupe's 250 other ballets—as a couple in about 40 of those. *Among Us,* the last work choreographed by Judith Jamison, that giantess among dancers—who took over the company after Ailey's death, in 1989, and was succeeded, in 2011, by Robert Battle—contains a stunning duet for the Simses. (In November, President Obama announced a posthumous Presidential Medal of Freedom for Ailey.) Ailey dancers rehearse and perform 43 weeks a year, and they have toured 71 countries. Asked how the Simses stay fresh in pieces they do so often, Linda says, "Alvin's work is elegant but also down to earth, so it's endlessly fulfilling. You are constantly exploring every part of yourself." Glenn adds, "Every new work allows you to be self-investigating. Every night I get to wear four different hats. That allows me to be a chameleon." Is "Fix Me, Jesus" their favorite work? "No, I'd put Alvin's *Night Creature* and *The River* first," says Linda. Glenn chooses *Festa Barocca,* created by Mauro Bigonzetti, with a wonderful section in it for them. The couple's one great regret: not to have known Alvin Ailey in person.

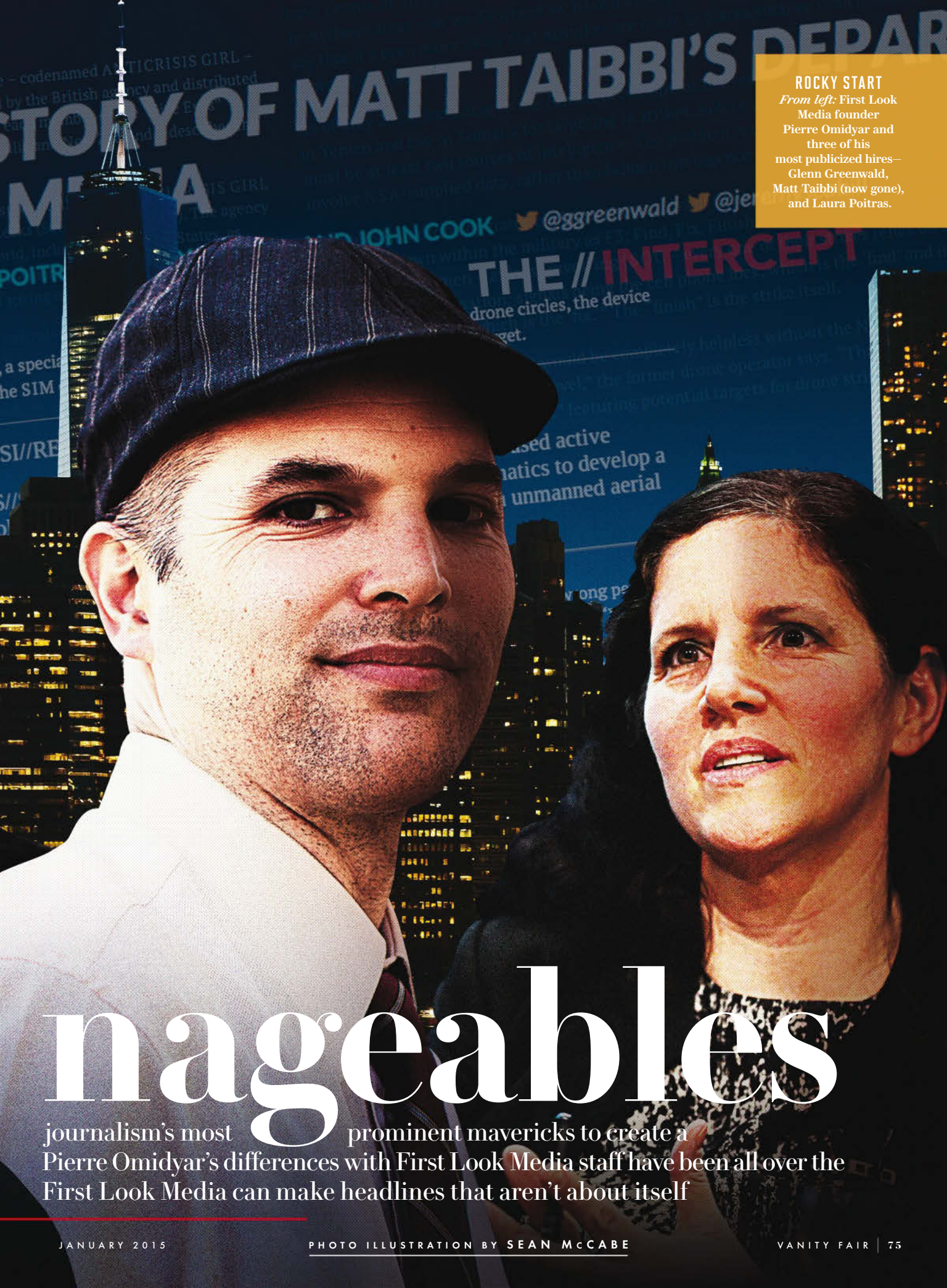
—WAYNE LAWSON

STYLED BY JULIE RAGOLIA; HAIR PRODUCTS BY AVEDA; MAKEUP PRODUCTS BY IMAN; HAIR, MAKEUP, AND GROOMING BY MARTIN CHRISTOPHER HARPER; FOR DETAILS, GO TO VF.COM/CREDITS



The Umma

When a crusading but conflict-averse billionaire bankrolls several of hard-nosed investigative news organization, it's a recipe for turmoil. eBay founder press. Two top hires are out the door. SARAH ELLISON asks whether



ROCKY START
From left: First Look Media founder Pierre Omidyar and three of his most publicized hires—Glenn Greenwald, Matt Taibbi (now gone), and Laura Poitras.

nageables

journalism's most prominent mavericks to create a

Pierre Omidyar's differences with First Look Media staff have been all over the

First Look Media can make headlines that aren't about itself

"Sanity Returned"

Pierre Omidyar's office in Honolulu occupies the second floor of a low-slung and unassuming commercial building, across from a park and a school. Down the street is a row of simple restaurants, and when Omidyar is in town, the billionaire founder of eBay often walks from his office to his favorite lunch spot, a place that he prefers not to have named, partly because he loves it and partly for reasons of security.

One morning in June 2013, just days after the first stories based on Edward Snowden's classified-document trove started appearing in *The Guardian* and *The Washington Post,* Omidyar received a call there from the Washington Post Company's chairman and C.E.O., Don Graham, who wanted to talk to him about buying the newspaper. The two had recently exchanged messages about the *Post* but had never before spoken directly. Omidyar was intrigued by Graham's passionate pitch for the kind of public-service journalism the *Post* produces. The two men continued to correspond over the summer. During those months, Omidyar read the autobiography of Graham's mother, Katharine Graham, who had been the publisher of the *Post* when the newspaper ran its stories on Watergate and the Pentagon Papers. As a memoir reader, he was all business: "I tried to skim through some of the personal stories, just focus on the newspaper ones," Omidyar told me when I visited him in Hawaii last fall. "I got excited about it."

But it was not to be. In the end, Graham named a price that Omidyar thought too high. There was a larger issue, too. Omidyar is admittedly conflict-averse, and when considering the *Post,* "I just remembered instances in my history where when people aren't fully aligned, when they haven't bought into the vision, it's really difficult and it's actually a little bit draining. It's not something I look forward to dealing with in the morning. I thought about myself actually in the role of leading a cultural transformation—that would mean dealing with talented people who fundamentally disagreed with me in some cases." When he imagined that scenario, he realized that he wanted to avoid it. "I said, O.K., fine, that's maybe not a great idea." He indulged a small laugh. "Ultimately I think sanity returned."

Don Graham ended up selling the *Post* and some affiliated publications to Amazon founder Jeff Bezos for $250 million. But the discussions with Graham had solidified Omidyar's resolve to dive deeper into the world of journalism. Soon afterward, Omidyar pledged to start his own news organization and match Bezos's investment in the *Post.* He enlisted two of the journalists who had reported on the Snowden documents: Glenn Greenwald, an aggressive and sometimes strident columnist and former lawyer, who had been writing a column for *The Guardian*'s U.S. edition, and Laura Poitras, an Academy Award–nominated documentary-film maker, who had been the first journalist to take Snowden seriously, and who did the most to bring his revelations to light. They were joined by Jeremy Scahill, another Academy Award–nominated documentary-film maker and a writer for *The Nation,* who had also cultivated an aggressive persona and strong relationships with national-security whistle-blowers. Omidyar announced that the new endeavor would have a "core mission around supporting and empowering independent journalists across many sectors and beats."

As Omidyar has by now discovered, starting an organization from scratch was hardly a safeguard against dealing with people who fundamentally disagreed with him. First Look Media, as Omidyar's enterprise has come to be called, is beset by staff turmoil and dissatisfaction. One of its most high-profile journalists, former *Rolling Stone* writer Matt Taibbi, left last October after clashing with Omidyar and his deputies, amid allegations of insubordination and possibly gender-based hostility on Taibbi's part. John Cook, editor in chief of what is so far First Look's only publication, The Intercept, is leaving the site at the end of 2014 to return to his former employer, the gossip-and-news site Gawker. These departures have laid bare how Omidyar's process-driven approach to management clashed with the ways of the independent-minded journalists he hired. In many respects, the current turmoil was entirely predictable. "He hired a newsroom of unmanageables," one veteran newspaper editor told me. More specifically, Omidyar is attempting to create a news organization with the help of individuals who have made their careers eschewing—when not mocking—news organizations of all stripes.

When the news of Taibbi's departure broke in *New York,* four of those individuals—Poitras, Greenwald, Scahill, and Cook—wrote a detailed retrospective on the goings-on at First Look, and then dared to publish it on The Intercept. The article located the dispute with Taibbi within a larger one: the journalists who joined First Look thought they were getting something "free-wheeling" but instead had been met with "a confounding array of rules, structures, and systems imposed by Omidyar and other First Look managers."

The article was journalistic independence as performance art, an act of self-conscious insubordination to defend a fallen comrade—Taibbi—and salvage the autonomy, or at least the appearance of it, that the entire venture had been founded on. It was also a kind of test for Omidyar. That the four of them weren't disciplined or fired reveals something fundamental about the strange standoff at the heart of the enterprise.

First Look began in the fall of 2013, amid a flurry of enthusiasm over the Snowden revelations, and amid intense pressure to keep publishing stories based on his vast cache of documents. An early rush to hire staff—less than two dozen all told—was quickly followed by a period of caution and circumspection as Omidyar began to think afresh about how he wanted his new journalism venture to look: the kind of thinking that everyone agrees would have been helpful to work out earlier. The problems at First Look are many, including an essential culture clash between people who appear to have antithetical opinions about everything from management style to subject matter to seating arrangements to whether journalists should have landlines. Disagreements over "process" have been at once petty and paralyzing.

Here's the basic recipe: Combine two types of strong-willed visionary—one cool and analytical, the other fervent and outspoken. Add a dash of messianic outlook to the ingredients. Heat under pressure. Could the result have turned out any other way?

Looking for a Business

I first met with Omidyar, who is 47, in September, in a small conference room in his Honolulu office. He did not exactly look strong-willed or visionary. He wore a blue polo shirt, jeans, a red woven necklace, and a wooden beaded bracelet. His dark hair, which he once wore in a ponytail, was cut short, a streak of gray above his forehead. He is a fan of *Battlestar Galactica* and occasionally referees his children's soccer games. The laid-back effect gives no hint of his drive

PAGES 74–75: PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE BENNET GROUP/A.P. IMAGES (OMIDYAR), BY ADAM BERRY/GETTY IMAGES (POITRAS), FROM IMAGE SOURCE/REX USA (SKYLINE), BY UESLEI MARCELINO/REUTERS/CORBIS (GREENWALD), RICHARD RENALDI (TAIBBI). OPPOSITE: PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAY L. CLENDENIN/LOS ANGELES TIMES/CONTOUR/GETTY IMAGES (SCAHILL), CHRISTIAN JUNGEBLODT/LAIF/REDUX (OMIDYAR), HIROKO MASUIKE/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX (COOK)

or his fixity of purpose. Omidyar told me that early on in his professional life he wanted to be removed from Silicon Valley in order to "have space to think" and to get away from the Valley's increasing focus "on money and wealth." In 2006 he moved to Hawaii, where both he and his wife, Pam, had spent parts of their childhood. The couple bought a home in the upscale Kahala neighborhood of Honolulu. Omidyar also reportedly owns a 640-acre ranch in Montana, a place that could serve as his solar-powered safe house. He keeps two private jets in Hawaii. This is a man with a worldview and opinions about the future.

Pierre Morad Omidyar was born in Paris in 1967 to well-to-do Iranian immigrants who had gone to France for university. His mother, a linguist, would eventually earn her Ph.D. at the Sorbonne. His father attended medical school. When Omidyar was six years old, the family moved to Washington, D.C., so his father could begin a residency at Johns Hopkins. His parents separated when he was young. According to the book *The Perfect Store: Inside eBay,* in seventh grade, Omidyar would sneak out of gym class to play around on his science teacher's Radio Shack TRS-80. He taught himself BASIC programming. The next year, in eighth grade, Omidyar and his mother moved to Hawaii so his mother could pursue fieldwork. He attended the prestigious Punahou School (Barack Obama's alma mater—Obama had graduated the year before); completed high school at St. Andrew's Episcopal School, in Potomac, Maryland; and went on to college at Tufts, where he met Pam, who was studying biology (she went on to get a master's in plant molecular genetics from U.C. Santa Cruz). The summer of his junior year, Omidyar got an internship as a Macintosh programmer in Silicon Valley. The internship turned into a job, and he took a semester off from school to keep it. Omidyar finished up college at Berkeley.

TURNOVER
Clockwise from right: eBay's Omidyar with company C.E.O. Meg Whitman, 2001; John Cook, editor in chief of The Intercept, who has now returned to Gawker; First Look's Jeremy Scahill.







After graduation, Omidyar found work for a short time at an Apple subsidiary called Claris. From Claris, he launched a start-up (for pen-based computing, later popularized by Palm), which was eventually bought by Microsoft, making Omidyar a millionaire before he was 30. Omidyar was one of the many programmers of that era looking for a new business idea, and he found it over Labor Day weekend in 1995 when, in the extra bedroom of his town house, he created a clunky auction site that allowed Internet users to buy goods from one another. He called it AuctionWeb—an early iteration of eBay.

Two years earlier Omidyar had met a Stanford business-school graduate, Jeff Skoll, now chairman of Participant Media, who was working at the time for Knight Ridder, attempting to develop the company's Internet strategy. Skoll was initially skeptical about eBay, but he eventually went to work for

AT FIRST LOOK, IT WAS HARD TO KNOW WHO WAS RUNNING THE SHOW—OR EVEN WHAT THE SHOW WAS.

Omidyar as eBay's first employee. Skoll talked to me about how revolutionary (and counterintuitive) the idea behind eBay—allowing total strangers to exchange goods—seemed in the 1990s. "It was a time when nobody trusted the Internet," he recalls. Omidyar's key insight was that "people are generally good and if they have information they'll act on it."

eBay went public in 1998, making Omidyar a billionaire. Omidyar is conscious of his rapid rise to wealth: "I created the company in September of 1995. . . . It was public in September of '98. I mean, you are talking three years of operation, right? I mean, it's insane." He is worth roughly $8 billion today. Omidyar gave up day-to-day responsibilities at eBay in 1999 (though he remains the company's chairman). He and Pam spent the next 15 years devoted to building a number of philanthropic endeavors that became the Omidyar Group. They have dedicated $1.5 billion to these causes and other public-service ventures.

Then, like billionaires before him, Pierre Omidyar caught the media bug.

The Arianna Factor

Omidyar recalls that, even before the Snowden revelations, a series of aggressive moves by the Justice Department had gotten his attention. The federal government, in 2012, had wiretapped Associated Press reporters in search of the source of an A.P. story. Two years earlier, the Justice Department had named Fox reporter James Rosen as a "co-conspirator" in a leak case. Both episodes became public in the spring of 2013 and alarmed Omidyar.

Then he spent the summer talking to Don Graham, and watching the Snowden revelations unfold. "I think Don Graham sort of ended up getting a 'two for one' as far as the industry goes, right?," Omidyar says now. "Because he did the right thing for the paper, he got some new capital and a committed owner. And he got me thinking seriously about journalism and what I could contribute to that in the context of buying his paper. But then our tracks diverged."

Omidyar's track led him to Arianna Huffington, who in early September 2013 had flown to Hawaii to launch Huffington Post Hawaii in partnership with Omidyar's own Honolulu Civil Beat, an online investigative news organization established in 2010. Civil Beat was created to provide an alternative to what some saw as the relaxed "aloha spirit" of Hawaiian journalism. The co-founder, Randy Ching, is a former eBay executive, and the first editor was John Temple, who had been the editor and publisher of Denver's *Rocky Mountain News* and a top editor at *The Washington Post.* (Both men would figure prominently in First Look CONTINUED ON PAGE 104

PRETTY *in* PYNCHON

I am pretty sure I will never get a better character name than Japonica Fenway," says Sasha Pieterse of her role in director Paul Thomas Anderson's *Inherent Vice,* based on the 2009 Thomas Pynchon novel. "She is super off-the-wall and basically very damaged on the inside—she's a runaway and a cocaine addict."

The 18-year-old actress grew up under brighter circumstances, as the only child of acrobatic dancers. "My dad threw my mom around for a living," she says. Born in Johannesburg, Pieterse (pronounced *Pee*-tur-suh) moved with her parents to Las Vegas when she was three. By the time she was five she was working consistently as an actress. Best known for her work on ABC Family's long-running teenage drama series *Pretty Little Liars,* Pieterse says, "I grew up on that show and it has given me such a great platform."

Inherent Vice, due out December 12 from Warner Bros., launches Pieterse into the acting stratosphere, alongside Joaquin Phoenix, who plays Larry "Doc" Sportello (think Bogart's Sam Spade as a stoner), Reese Witherspoon, Martin Short, Owen Wilson, Josh Brolin, and others in a sprawling cast. It's set in Los Angeles at the end of the 1960s, after the Manson murders, and follows Doc as he attempts to crack the disappearance of a real-estate mogul while navigating a city of burnouts, beach bums, and loan sharks.

Pieterse, despite her age, was already well versed in Anderson's films when she got the call. "The first one I saw was *There Will Be Blood* and I fell in love with it, and I just kept going, with *Boogie Nights* and *The Master,*" she says. "I don't think there is any other director except Paul who could pull this off. He and Pynchon tend to tell stories in the same way."

–KRISTA SMITH

STYLED BY DEBORAH AFSHANI; HAIR PRODUCTS BY BUMBLE AND BUMBLE; MAKEUP PRODUCTS BY LANCÔME; NAIL ENAMEL BY SHESWAI LACQUER; HAIR BY MAKIKO NARA; MAKEUP BY KATHY JEUNG; MANICURE BY DEBBIE LEAVITT; PRODUCED ON LOCATION BY MARY JEAN RIBAS; FOR DETAILS, GO TO VF.COM/CREDITS

PHOTOGRAPH BY RENE & RADKA



Sasha Pieterse, photographed in Altadena, California.

PIETERSE WEARS CLOTHING BY FENDI; JEWELRY BY VAN CLEEF & ARPELS.



The planet's best-selling author since 2001, James Patterson has more than 300 million copies of his books in print, an army of co-writers, several TV deals in the works, and an estimated income of $90 million last year alone. But where's the respect? Exploring the contradictions of this one-man publishing conglomerate, TODD S. PURDUM learns how Patterson's childhood and advertising career made him the ultimate storyteller

The HENRY FO



AUTHOR, AUTHOR! The prolific novelist James Patterson, on the writing bed at his home in Briarcliff Manor, New York.

GROOMING BY CANDICE FORNESS

RD *of* BOOKS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GASPER TRINGALE

It seems somehow fitting that James Patterson, the advertising Mad Man turned impresario of the global thriller industry, spends his summers perched high above the Hudson River in Westchester County, halfway between Don Draper's Ossining and Washington Irving's Sleepy Hollow, where the Headless Horseman once roamed the roads by night. Perhaps no author in literary history has more seamlessly melded commerce and creepiness to create an international brand, one that has transformed a wide swath of the publishing industry and given Patterson not only a Rockefeller's river view but a Rockefeller's bank account to boot.

With 305 million copies of his books in print worldwide, Patterson is the great white shark of novelists, a relentless writing machine who has to keep swimming forward in order to feed, and who, together with his army of about two dozen credited co-writers, has been the planet's best-selling author since 2001 (ahead of J. K. Rowling, Nora Roberts, Dr. Seuss, and John Grisham). Of all the hardcover fiction sold in the U.S. in 2013, books by Patterson accounted for one out of every 26. Altogether, he has produced more than 130 separate works—the "books by" page in his latest novels actually takes up three full pages. *Forbes* estimates his income for the year ending last June at $90 million. When I had a chance to ask Patterson about that figure, he at first said, "I don't know," and then followed up with "Yeah, probably."

The first 25 years of Patterson's career were spent in advertising, culminating with his tenure as C.E.O. of the North American branch of J. Walter Thompson, the giant international agency, where he was also creative director and led the "Aren't You Hungry?" campaign for Burger King, while writing fiction on the side. His first novel, *The Thomas Berryman Number,* about a Nashville newspaperman on a murderer's trail, was rejected by 31 publishers before Little, Brown published it, in 1976. It won the Edgar Award for best first novel from the Mystery Writers of America, but sold only about 10,000 copies. Since then—and especially since 1996, when he quit advertising to write full-time—Patterson has proved that his readers have insatiable appetites. He has produced a slew of books—detective series, stand-alone romances, illustrated novels for young adults and for middle-school readers—across a sea of genres, accounting, by his own estimate, for about 30 percent of Little, Brown's total revenues. He is intimately involved in designing his books and devising their marketing and advertising campaigns, with the help of a special in-house unit of half a dozen staffers at Little, Brown dedicated solely to serving the Patterson empire.

"I'm sure there's no publishing relationship like it," Michael Pietsch—Patterson's former editor who is now C.E.O. of Hachette Book Group (Little, Brown's parent company)—told me recently. "Jim is the smartest person I've ever worked with, across a vast landscape of things you can be brilliant about—suspense, emotions, and readers' expectations and how to work them." Pietsch said Patterson had built "a kind of studio system in which he can imagine these stories into being, then work with co-authors so that these stories come into the world."

Indeed, Patterson is to publishing what Thomas Kinkade was to painting, or the television producer John Wells was to a series like *E.R.* He is not a tortured artist in a garret but rather presides over an atelier that produces mass popular entertainment on an astonishing scale. He once said of his work, in a profile a decade ago, "I look at it the way Henry Ford would look at it." The remark has gained currency. Patterson today is busier than ever, in the midst of his current 24-book contract, preparing to launch a TV series based on his thriller *Zoo,* and campaigning with personal appearances and his deep pockets in





MAKING IT

From left: **Patterson in the mid-1970s, early in his career at J. Walter Thompson. The family home in Palm Beach—"kind of obnoxious," Patterson says. The view over the Hudson from the Patterson house in Briarcliff Manor.**

WHEN AN INTERVIEWER ASKED PATTERSON ABOUT HIS PROCESS OF "CHURNING OUT" BOOKS, HE SAID, "YOU MEAN *CRAFTING?*"

support of young-adult literacy and independent bookstores. He has also been outspoken, loudly and prominently, on the subject of the long dispute—settled in November—between Amazon and Hachette Book Group, in the course of which the online retailer had penalized Hachette writers. Because Patterson is a Little, Brown author, many of his own books felt the pinch—they were often not in stock, or were unavailable for pre-order. (Books of Patterson's on Amazon's Top 100 list, like anyone else's on that list, tended not to be affected.) Speaking to BookExpo America last spring, Patterson told the audience of publishers and booksellers, "If Amazon is the new American way, then maybe it has to be changed."

Not surprisingly, his published output has drawn its share of detractors. Stephen King once dismissed Patterson as a "terrible writer" who is "very, very successful." The head of one rival publishing house said to me of Patterson's method, "It's a little disrespectful to say it's paint by numbers, but it *is* a little bit paint by numbers. Does that make him bad? No, I think it makes him smart."

There have been blockbuster authors for years, from a smashing one-off such as Margaret Mitchell to perennial favorites such as Dean Koontz and Dan Brown. The Stratemeyer Syndicate deployed a battalion of ghostwriters to produce Nancy Drew, Hardy Boys, and Bobbsey Twins stories for generations of readers. But even his detractors agree that Patterson is in a class by himself. One secret to his success: outlines of up to 80 pages for each book, in which Patterson alone sketches virtually all the action in detail, in a brisk and breezy tone that mirrors the finished books. For the novels on which he works with co-authors (some recruited from his days at J. Walter Thompson, some recommended by other writers, one a former New York City doorman), Patterson sends his collaborator an outline, then revises the resulting manuscript multiple times. Here is an excerpt from the first-chapter outline for *Honeymoon,* a 2005 thriller about a black-widow killer, which Patterson co-wrote with Howard Roughan: "Nora and Gordon continue their quick banter, funny and loving. We like them. They're good together—and not just when they're standing up. A minute later the two engage in some terrific, earth-moving sex. It makes us feel great, horny, and envious."

I caught up with Patterson as he was about to make his annual fall migration from his summer place in Briarcliff Manor, New York—a roomy fieldstone house done in tasteful blue-and-white shades with a pool and terrace straight off the cover of a Frontgate catalogue—to his primary residence, a 20,000-square-foot oceanfront home in Palm Beach that he was quick to say is "pretty fucking . . . kind of obnoxious." Chipper and cheery at 67, with a ruddy face, twinkling blue eyes, and sandy hair gone to gray, and dressed in the soft lamb's-wool sweater, polo shirt, and moccasins of the retired executive he is, Patterson received me in a light-filled workspace whose dominant feature is a big sleigh bed, where he writes longhand on old-fashioned yellow pads, with the silver ribbon of the Hudson below him and framed *New York Times*

PHOTOGRAPHS © JESSICA KLEWICKI GLYNN (PALM BEACH); COURTESY OF THE J. WALTER THOMPSON ARCHIVES (PATTERSON)







best-seller lists and posters from the movie versions of his books filling the walls. All around us are thick stacks of manuscripts in progress, each topped by a light-blue cover page. A folder is emblazoned in bold type: IDEAS. Glittering honors dot the shelves. "I honestly don't know," Patterson said when I asked him to identify one statuette. "I think this is a Clio"—advertising's highest award. The decorating is the work of his wife, Sue, a former J. Walter Thompson art director, whom he met at work and married 17 years ago.

Patterson is the undisputed king of the digital publishing age, but he remains an analog kind of guy. A small Lucite frame on his office table holds this instruction: "How to Google: Press Safari icon at bottom of your iPad." He speaks in stop-and-start sentences, as if racing to keep pace with his own thoughts. And he can be touchy about his reputation for mass production. When an interviewer for the Catholic-themed Eternal Word Television Network asked him last spring about his process of "churning out" books, he interrupted with a steely glint in his eye, saying, "You mean *crafting?*" His work is akin to that of a TV "show-runner," who sets a series in motion and guides its tone and pace, no matter who else might write individual episodes. "And they don't take shit like I do," he says of someone such as Vince Gilligan, creator of *Breaking Bad.* "They go, 'Gilligan! This guy's great!' "

"My Way or the Highway"

For someone who says he "never cared for" the ad game, Patterson was awfully good at it. He insists today that his first profession has limited relevance to his second, but the record strongly suggests otherwise.

In the 1930s, J. Walter Thompson wrote the ads that made the grilled-cheese sandwich into a national staple, all to boost the sales of its client, Kraft Foods, a maker of processed cheese. Patterson has done something similar: he has built a powerhouse brand, then spread it wider and wider. The story behind *Along Came a Spider,* the tale of Alex Cross, a widowed, jazz-playing, African-American detective with a degree in forensic psychology, which became his first blockbuster success, in 1993, is by now the stuff of publishing-industry lore. Patterson believed the surest path to success was to use television advertising, a strategy then all but unheard of in publishing because of the high cost. Little, Brown balked, but Patterson knew the tricks of his trade: he created and shot his own commercial. After seeing the finished product, the publisher agreed to share the cost of broadcasting it in three markets—New York, Chicago, and Washington—cities where (Patterson had determined) thrillers sold briskly. The book started out at No. 9 on the *New York Times* best-seller list, eventually climbing to No. 2 in paperback. With more than five million copies in print, it is still Patterson's single most successful work.

Patterson built the Cross franchise into a successful series, then branched out into standalone books. In 1996, he proposed trying something more radical: publishing multiple titles a year. Little, Brown objected, fearing that Patterson would diminish his overall sales, but he prevailed: sales soared.

When Patterson's only son, Jack, now 16 and a student at Hotchkiss, was in grade

PATTERSON'S PREFERRED OBITUARY: "HE WAS
SLOWING DOWN
AT 101, AND HAD ONLY
FINISHED FOUR NOVELS THAT YEAR."



COMING SOON
An assembly line of James Patterson works in progress, written from detailed outlines with a team of collaborators.

school and proving to be a reluctant reader, Patterson decided to take aim at a new demographic. As he put it when we spoke, "I can write for these little creeps." Patterson launched a multi-series line of young-adult and children's novels—"Maximum Ride," "Witch & Wizard," "Treasure Hunters," and "I Funny"—that fill not only the shelves of every Barnes & Noble but those of your local grocery store too. Now Patterson produces a dozen titles a year, and there seems to be no upward limit to his overall sales.

Over time, Patterson has built a reputation for not suffering fools, and for demanding from Little, Brown's marketing team more rigorous research and analysis of the sort he was used to on Madison Avenue. He works publicists hard on book tours. In a "What I've Learned" video he recorded for the Literary Guild, Patterson declared, "I know what I want in all my books. It's my way or the highway. I know who my readers are and how to engage them, how to scare them, how to get people to feel for the characters, how to make my readers laugh." Bill Robinson, co-president at James Patterson Entertainment, the company dedicated to promoting Patterson's efforts for film and television, recounted an exchange with his boss. "The other day we were discussing notes on a project, and I suggested something contrary to his impulse, and he said, 'I'm sorry, Bill, did you recently write an international best-seller that I'm not aware of?' "

Patterson's formula is brutally simple. His books have lots of periods in the paragraphs, lots of paragraphs per page, and very few pages per chapter—as few as three or four. Each chapter begins with a quick reminder of people and events in the prior one (to refresh the memory of any sleepy reader who put the book down the night before), and most books end with a bonus "free preview" chapter of another book in Patterson's voluminous oeuvre.

It is no insult to say that the prose is often bad, as in this example from *Unlucky 13*—the latest installment in Patterson's "Women's Murder Club" series, co-authored with Maxine Paetro—describing a terrorist who has hijacked a luxury cruise ship: "The sight of the man, the way he walked, his hardy-har attitude, and the random murders were so crazy-making, she felt this close to going bug-fuck." And here is the scene on the ship: "A gas lamp that had been placed on top of the piano threw a dim light over the formerly elegant room, which now looked debased, like a used-up exotic dancer turning tricks on the street."

The buzz in publishing circles is that success may have mellowed Patterson somewhat, that he is no longer so insistent and demanding. "I always thought he was a total dick," one non–Little, Brown executive told me. "I think that's not fair now." Pietsch, who is not only Patterson's ultimate boss but a friend and neighbor in Westchester, says diplomatically, "Having run a big corporation in a talent-based industry gave him a great deal of confidence in speaking with candor about things he doesn't like, which is a rarity for an author in the publishing business."

And Patterson is emphatically in business. A few years ago, he dropped his longtime agency, William Morris, in favor of the Washington superlawyer Robert Barnett. (Disclosure: Barnett also happens to be my agent.) His former agent, Jennifer Rudolph Walsh, maintains there are no hard feelings. "He didn't cost us tens of millions of dollars," she told me. "He made us tens of millions of dollars."

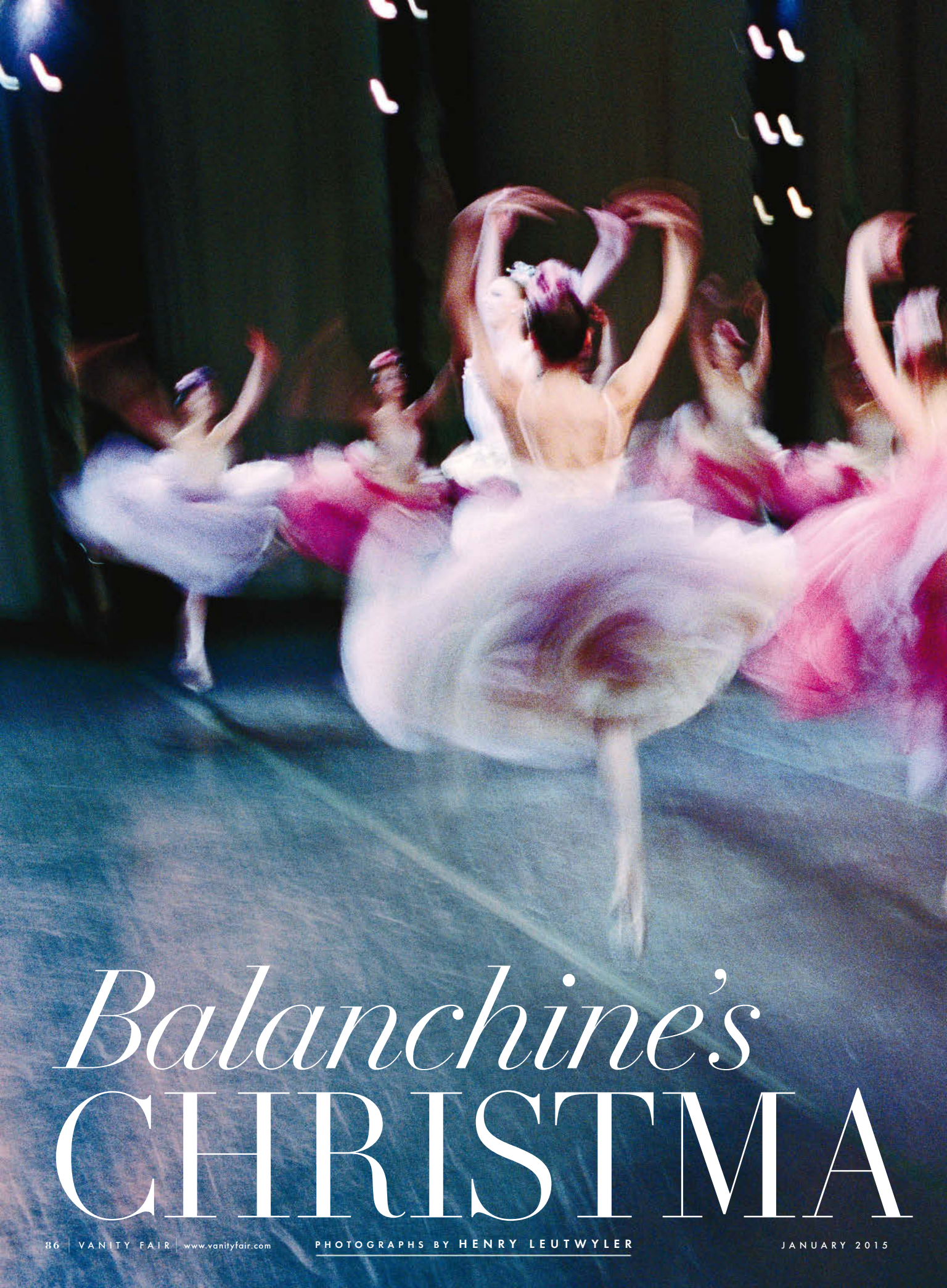
A Devil Inside Him?

Patterson's self-presentation is remarkably sunny. His midday tipple of choice is a bottle of Stewart's Orange 'n Cream soda, and midway through our talk, Patterson's wife brought in a plate of freshly baked chocolate-chip cookies, a signature gesture of Sue's hospitality that I have seen mentioned by others who have met with Patterson.

But Patterson's stories can be raw, with more than their share of sexual sadism—sliced breasts, sodomy by snake—and sociopathic killers. "I'm inside all of you!" the murderer in *Invisible,* one of Patterson's latest thrillers, declares. "The only difference is I don't hide behind some mask, driving my SUV and sipping Starbucks at my kid's soccer game."

Is there a devil inside James Patterson?, I asked. "Not a murderer!" he said with a laugh. "Or if there was, I'm not telling *Vanity Fair.*"

But there is darkness. James Brendan Patterson grew up in CONTINUED ON PAGE 100



Balanchine's CHRISTMA

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **HENRY LEUTWYLER**



FLOWER POWER "Waltz of the Flowers," featuring Dewdrop, from a 2013 performance of the New York City Ballet's *The Nutcracker*.

Fifty years ago, George Balanchine finally staged the *Nutcracker* of his dreams, a triumph for the New York City Ballet in its then new Lincoln Center home. LAURA JACOBS tells how Balanchine's childhood Christmases, his youth in St. Petersburg (dancing multiple roles in *The Nutcracker* himself), and his 41-foot tree sparked an American holiday tradition

S MIRACLE

Performance a big big success," wrote the great American dancer Jacques d'Amboise in his journal entry of December 11, 1964. "Karinska's costumes—Rouben's set—production a tremendous triumph. Mrs. Kennedy and John John and Caroline there—Allegra [Kent] danced *pas de deux* very well—Balanchine after said it was the best dancing I had done—Karinska said a friend asked her what was in the costume that made me stay in the air—'Love.'"

It was a big big year, 1964—a triumphant year for George Balanchine, Lincoln Kirstein, and the company they'd founded in 1948, the New York City Ballet. January sailed in with a momentous windfall: in mid-December of '63 the Ford Foundation had announced that nearly $6 million of its $7.7 million dance budget would go to N.Y.C.B. and its School of American Ballet (S.A.B.), a show of Establishment support that crowned the company first among its peers in American dance. On April 23, the N.Y.C.B. profile rose still higher. In a nationally televised broadcast the company was welcomed into the New York State Theater, one of the brand-new venues that made up Manhattan's campus of culture, the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. In his diary, Kirstein called it "the best theater for dance in America (the world?)." Eight months after that came the December 11 transplant of *The Nutcracker,* Balanchine's stunningly successful achievement of 1954.

The first of his five full-length ballets, this was the *Nutcracker* that launched the hundreds of *Nutcracker* ballets that now dominate America's Decembers. Act One centers on a little girl named Marie, who through the conjuring of her godfather, Herr Drosselmeier, encounters a nutcracker doll who becomes a prince, a Christmas tree that grows like Jack's beanstalk, toy soldiers battling mice, and a blizzard. Act Two alights in the Land of Sweets, where the Sugarplum Fairy reigns. In preparation for its State Theater debut, *The Nutcracker* was given the Emerald City treatment—new sets, new costumes, a few revisions, and a gloriously soaring scale. For 16 years, since the beginning of N.Y.C.B., Balanchine had been thinking big but had to execute it all on a small stage and a shoestring, training his dancers to move as if there were no limits even as they smacked into stagehands while careening into the wings. For 40 years, since leaving Russia in 1924, he'd recalled with longing the lavishly outfitted stage of St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre, upon which he came of age.

Finally, on December 11, 1964, at 4:45 in the afternoon, reality caught up with his vision.

"I recall sitting in the chair right before the curtain going up," says Jean-Pierre Frohlich, who 50 years ago danced the role of bratty little boy Fritz in that afternoon's performance. "It's strange to explain, but in the overture you're between the angel curtain and the scrim, and for some reason that angel drop was moving forward, moving forward, moving forward—because of all the air. There's a lot of air in that theater."

"It was very exciting," says Gloria Govrin, who that day unveiled a sinuous new version of the Arabian Coffee dance in Act Two. A "mini-Salome," Balanchine called it. Previously the piece had been for a man with a hookah and four little-girl parrots. But Balanchine decided, "We're going to wake up the fathers," and so for glamorous Govrin, all five feet ten of her, he fashioned a seductive solo of Georgian Orientalism. "I remember the reception of doing it," says Govrin, "because nobody knew there was going to be a change. It got a huge ovation, several bows. In the middle of *Nutcracker* it's kind of unusual to have one or two more bows."

Allegra Kent, who was just returning from the birth of her second child when she danced the Sugarplum Fairy, recalls, "It was thrilling! Bigger stage, farther to run, farther to jump, more expansive, more magic, more exultation in your blood."

Down in the orchestra pit, the timpanist Arnold Goldberg was positioned, as always, to see Balanchine in his usual place, downstage right. What Goldberg hasn't forgotten in five decades of State Theater *Nutcracker*s is the first time the Christmas tree—this one bigger, better, and more beautiful than before—began its inexorable growth upward. It wasn't the 4:45 performance but the dress rehearsal, and Goldberg was watching not the tree but Balanchine. "He's standing with his hands in his jeans pockets, looking around," says Goldberg. "And it came up. He was breathless. It was priceless, the joy of watching Mr. B.'s face . . . I mean, he'd dreamt about it. He had the stage built so that the tree could be one piece. That tree meant everything to *The Nutcracker.*"

It was always about the tree. Balanchine never pretended otherwise. His Mariinsky history, carried lightly yet lovingly, was often behind the decisions he made about this or that ballet—especially in the years from 1948 to 1964, when the young company was dancing at the former Mecca Temple, a theater of Moorish design on West 55th Street. Run by the New York City Center of Music and Drama, Inc.—and therefore called "City Center"—the theater had a stage that was unpleasantly cramped, with no frills to speak of. The St. Petersburg theater Balanchine had grown up in was all frills, with all manner of special effects made possible by a large stage with traps, wings, and a high fly space, not to mention the deep pockets of the czar. When it came to Tchaikovsky's big three—the ballets *Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty,* and *The Nutcracker*—Balanchine had seen them ideally produced on their native ground. He never attempted *The Sleeping Beauty,* even at the State Theater, because every time he wanted to do it—first for Suzanne Farrell, then for Gelsey Kirkland, then for

"FOR ME CHRISTMAS WAS SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY," SAID BALANCHINE.

Darci Kistler—he hit up against the same problem. "There's not enough traps for the traveling effects," he told the choreographer John Clifford. "If we can't do it with the right scenery and sets then I don't want to do it." As for Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake,* Balanchine thought the story was nonsense. In 1951 he put his own spin on it at City Center, distilling four acts into a vertiginous one-act fantasia.

From Russia with Love

But with *The Nutcracker,* the connection was emotional. Balanchine had gone from boy to man in this ballet. As a youth on that imperial stage in St. Petersburg he had danced the roles of a mouse, the Nutcracker/Little Prince, and the Mouse King. As a young adult he was dazzling as the jester with a hoop, choreography he would lift straight into his 1954 production and rename Candy Cane. Not only was he exacting about how his dancers should move through the hoop ("It's complicated," says the Carolina Ballet artistic director, Robert Weiss, who danced Candy Cane for many years; "the hoop goes over and you jump into the over-ness of it"), he remained proprietary about the role itself. "Not bad, dear," Balanchine once told Clifford as he came offstage—his "not bad" was high praise—"but you know I did it faster." When, in the early 50s, Morton Baum, then chairman of City Center's finance committee and a guardian angel to N.Y.C.B., asked Balanchine to choreograph the *Nutcracker Suite,* a popular abridgment of Tchaikovsky's score, Balanchine answered, "If I do anything, it will be full-length and expensive."



LINCOLN'S CENTER
N.Y.C.B. co-founders Lincoln Kirstein and George Balanchine, conferring in a New York City dance studio, circa 1960.

He was not just reaching back to the Mariinsky *Nutcracker*—which in Russia is performed throughout the year—but calling up the Christmases of his childhood, the sense of warmth and plenty that was embodied in a tree brimming with fruits and chocolates, glittering with tinsel and paper angels. "For me Christmas was something extraordinary," Balanchine told the writer Solomon Volkov. "On Christmas night we had only the family at home: mother, auntie, and the children. And, of course, the Christmas tree. The tree had a wonderful scent, and the candles gave off their own aroma of wax." As Elizabeth Kendall reveals in her fascinating recent book about Balanchine's first 20 years, *Balanchine & the Lost Muse,* the family was constantly far-flung, with one or the other parent often away or the children off in separate schools. Balanchine himself was "stuck" (his word) in ballet school when he was nine. Those happy Christmases when the family was together—always in the foreground of his memory—seem to have fused with *The Nutcracker* and its tree.

"So Baum gave me $40,000," Balanchine explained to the writer Nancy Reynolds. "We studied how the tree could grow both up and also out, like an umbrella. The tree cost $25,000, and Baum was angry. 'George,' he said, 'can't you do it without the tree?'" "*The Nutcracker,*" Balanchine stated, "*is* the tree." It was a line he would repeat, with variations, throughout the rest of his life.

The City Center *Nutcracker* ended up costing a total of $80,000, and its tree stands at a pivotal moment in N.Y.C.B. history. "The City Ballet audience at City Center," says the critic Nancy Goldner, "was part of a larger, middle-class audience that was interested in high-quality art (opera, theater) at low prices. There was also a component of artists and writers who were especially interested in Balanchine." While a growing number in this audience recognized Balanchine's genius and relished the deeply poetic, uniquely plotless, modestly decorated ballets he was making, the company did not have the kind of mainstream following that fills a house. "In those days at City Center," recalls Kay Mazzo, the co-chairman of faculty at S.A.B., "it sometimes seemed there were more people

FROM THE GRANGER COLLECTION



SOMETIMES YOU FEEL LIKE A NUTCRACKER

Above, Mother Ginger and a pair of Polichinelles; *below,* Act I characters Drosselmeier, his nephew (the Nutcracker), party hosts and guests, the Mouse King and mice, toy soldiers, windup dolls Columbine and Harlequin, and Snowflakes.

"*THE NUTCRACKER*," GEORGE BALANCHINE SAID THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE, "*IS* THE TREE."

onstage in *Western Symphony* than were sitting out in the audience." *The Nutcracker,* a family entertainment that was accessible to all, was an invitation to the ballet, appealing to young and old alike. Within a year it was a holiday blockbuster. In 1957 and again in 1958, Balanchine's *Nutcracker,* somewhat trimmed, was broadcast nationally on CBS.

A Tree Grows in Midtown

Still, that tree was not Balanchine's be-all and end-all. To begin with, it wasn't even one tree but two. A tree of normal scale sat upstage right in a cozy drawing room, while a bottom section lay flat on the floor in front of it, folded like an accordion and hidden by a pile of presents. For the tree to grow, both sections had to be timed so that they appeared to be one. The tree would shake, stutter, spark, and snag. Sometimes a space would show between the two parts. While there are those who remember this wheezy tree fondly, Balanchine did not. The tree of his dreams—a single tree, not two halves stuttering and snagging—required the theater of his dreams. With a trap.

So added to the size of its stage, the roominess of its wings, the height of its proscenium (which kept the balcony views unobstructed) and its fly was the generous depth beneath the State Theater stage. The monumental tree that was conceived for the 1964 transplant begins the ballet measuring 18 feet tall and projecting two feet at the base. This part of the tree is rigid. But nestled six feet under the stage is more tree—23 feet more. This increasingly wide and thick strata of branches is built on a series of graduated oval pipe rings that fit one on top of the other and are connected by short chains that allow the rings to collapse or expand like an accordion. When the accordion is completely open and the tree reaches its full height of 41 feet, it is also, at the base, 23 feet wide with a projection of 4 feet six inches. The trap that was constructed specifically for this moment in this ballet—oddly shaped and oddly placed at the back of the stage—has no other purpose during the rest of the year. New York City Opera, which for 45 years shared the State Theater with N.Y.C.B., used it but once. Today we can see that the trap and the tree were nothing short of totemic—Balanchine marking his territory.

It's important to understand that when Balanchine, Kirstein, and company moved to the State Theater, in April 1964, they did not know if they would be able to stay there beyond a prescribed two-year period. The theater had been built with public funds to be part of the New York World's Fair. After the Fair it was to become the property of the city of New York, which would then lease the theater to Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc. There was a continuing behind-the-scenes battle over who should manage the State Theater: the more patrician Lincoln Center, Inc., or the plebeian City Center of Music and Drama, Inc. Balanchine and Kirstein were terrified that if Lincoln Center won, they'd be asked to leave, or to sublease the theater at huge expense. Balanchine made his desire clear during the April 23 telecast. When asked if the State Theater suited his purposes, he said, "I think that we have to stay a very, very long time here to use everything that is possible." Kirstein, meanwhile, was having all the company's scenery remade—scaled upward—so that it wouldn't fit in City Center. The battle ended in January of 1965 when, after four months of negotiations, an agreement was reached. City Center was made a Lincoln Center constituent and the State Theater was officially home to the New York City Ballet.

"The tree is the ballerina," says N.Y.C.B. technical director Perry Silvey, quoting Balanchine. "A high-maintenance ballerina in this case. And of course we think of ourselves as her partner." Silvey has been with the company for 38 years and knows the State Theater and its tree like the back of his hand. He estimates that to replace the tree would cost at least $250,000. The branches, lights, and ornaments have been refurbished twice since 1964—and in 2011 the ornaments were repainted for a *Live from Lincoln Center* broadcast of *The Nutcracker*—but happily the original skeletal framework is still going strong. Before every performance this ballerina is shaken to see what's loose, her bulbs are checked and garlands arranged. When the ballet finishes its annual run of 47 performances, the tree is not stored in New Jersey with many of the ballet's other props but in the State Theater basement. "The box that the tree lives in," say Marquerite Mehler, N.Y.C.B. director of production, "always lives here. We keep it close."

"Lives," she says, as if the tree were dormant beneath the theater, where it stays until awakened by Tchaikovsky, that thrilling, climbing theme—tumescence mixed with transcendence—hung like garland after garland as the tree grows higher and wider, taking the little girl Marie through fear, sleep, and snow into a realm of unreality, a heavenly pleasure dome of sweetness and light.

"What I remember most," says Suki Schorer, an S.A.B. faculty member who danced the Marzipan Shepherdess on that December afternoon of 1964, "was how really excited Balanchine was to finally have a big tree. He talked about it, how as a young boy he would look up at this immense tree. He wanted Marie to have that same feeling of looking up."

Stage Might

"Our format was now irrevocably on a grand scale," Kirstein would write of the move to the State Theater. "In some eyes, it was the Big Time." In all eyes, actually. And it wasn't just the tree, now weighing approximately 2,200 pounds, that was bigger. The production that was loaded into the State Theater in December 1964 contained "a lot of air," horizontally and vertically, and the dancers had to fill it.

"It was a major, major adjustment," says Edward Villella, a City Ballet star and founder of the Miami City Ballet. "Now we had long diagonals, large circles to get through. It changed not only the look of the company but the way we danced. There's nothing worse than holding back. Once you get going you want to sail, to just let that momentum carry you. I loved it."

"The curiosity for the new building and the new theater and the new productions was huge," recalls Mimi Paul, who on that opening weekend of '64 danced Dewdrop, the glittering solo that Balanchine suspended inside the Waltz of the Flowers. "Bigger everything had to be. Dewdrop—all of a sudden, in that space, I could feel it."

"More plié, higher relevé, higher legs,"

COSTUMES BY KARINSKA; HAIR PRODUCTS BY DAVINES AND KÉRASTASE PARIS; MAKEUP PRODUCTS BY NARS; HAIR BY HERVÉ AND SHINYA NAKAGAWA; MAKEUP BY HIROMI ANDO AND YUMI LEE; WIGS STYLED BY SUZY ALVAREZ; FOR DETAILS, GO TO VF.COM/CREDITS



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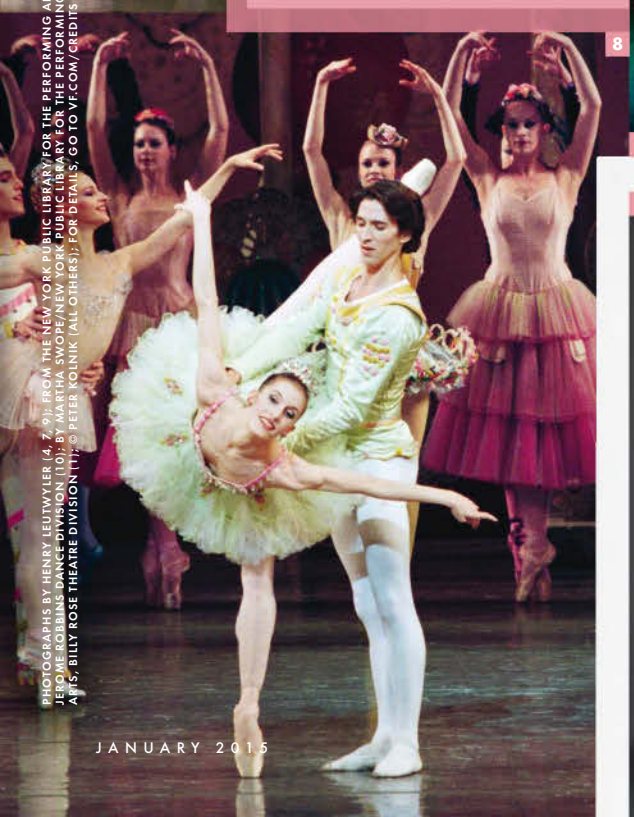
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BACKSTAGE LASSES

(1) Lee Radziwill and Jacqueline Kennedy with their daughters, Tina and Caroline, after a 1965 *Nutcracker* performance, greeted by Balanchine, press agent Robert Larkin, and dancers Allegra Kent and Jacques d'Amboise. **(2)** The Little Prince and Princess arrive in the Land of Sweets, 2010. **(3)** The majestic Christmas tree. **(4)** Costumes backstage. **(5)** Macaulay Culkin as Fritz, 1989. **(6)** Heather Watts as Dewdrop in the 1,000th performance of *The Nutcracker*—Peter Martins's farewell performance—December 6, 1983. **(7)** The Sugarplum Fairy meets the Little Prince and Princess. **(8)** Wendy Whelan as the Sugarplum Fairy and Damian Woetzel as her Cavalier, 1998. **(9)** Tea. **(10)** Karinska's costume sketches.







PHOTOGRAPHS BY HENRY LEUTWYLER (4, 7, 9); FROM THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, JEROME ROBBINS DANCE DIVISION (10); BY MARTHA SWOPE/NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, BILLY ROSE THEATRE DIVISION (11); © PETER KOLNIK (ALL OTHERS); FOR DETAILS, GO TO VF.COM/CREDITS

says Schorer. "I remember Balanchine telling dancers in Dewdrop just to be big and free, not worry if your knee was totally straight, not calculate."

"I remember him rehearsing the Waltz of the Flowers," says Frohlich, "and just telling them to 'move big, you're young, *move* . . . '"

Even Tchaikovsky's music had to be bigger. "As far as the orchestra was concerned," says timpanist Goldberg, "Balanchine would come down and say, especially to me, 'A little bit louder.' I'd say, but it says *pianissimo.* He'd say, 'Play a little louder.'"

All this unleashed energy was framed in looming new sets by Rouben Ter-Arutunian, which replaced the more ethereal vision of Horace Armistead's lightly drawn living room for Act One and his colonnade of cloud spirals in Act Two, a Versailles in the sky. Ter-Arutunian's Act One was bourgeois Biedermeier, with a feeling of financial security (as N.Y.C.B., for a moment, was feeling), but it of course contained the same elements in the same places: the tree and presents, the paned-and-draped window, the love seat upon which Marie falls asleep and dreams. The new Act Two was a surreal kingdom of tortes, bombes, and charlottes linked by chocolate stairways. "I think it was a little too saccharine," says Barbara Horgan, Balanchine's longtime assistant and a trustee of the George Balanchine Trust. "I must confess that even Balanchine thought it was too sweet." In 1977, this backdrop was removed and Ter-Arutunian provided a Victorian Gothic colonnade made of candy sticks and white lace doilies, very airy, which floated in front of a pink cyclorama. Still sweet, this delicious set never fails to win gasps of delight from the audience. In 1993, for further nuance, lighting designer Mark Stanley imbued each divertissement with its own saturated color—from ballet pink (Sugarplum's solo) to deep coral (Spanish Hot Chocolate) to ultraviolet (Arabian Coffee) to peach (Marzipan Shepherdess) to lilac (Waltz of the Flowers) to Balanchine Blue (Sugarplum pas de deux)—the milky midnight blue of a St. Petersburg White Night.

"When we first lit it at the State Theater we had a call from Con Edison on the West Side," says Horgan. "There seemed to be a surge consistent with our performances—the candy and all that. They could always tell when we were doing *Nutcracker* because we pulled so much power."

Let It Snow

More mysterious was the set for Snow, which comes at the end of Act One. This forest of white, visited by the world's most ingénue blizzard ("Snowflakes," Balanchine ballerina Merrill Ashley still hears Mr. B. saying, "run better, run beautifully"), is the frozen terrain through which Marie and the Little Prince must pass. Armistead's snowy wood was replaced with a towering forest primeval. Here is the untouched world to which the Christmas tree grows. These firs are her sisters. Let us not forget that Balanchine's family had a dacha in Finland—and they lived there year-round from when he was age five to nine. "A Finland winter," explains Elizabeth Kendall, who visited the site, "in a forest with snow, it's many many tall tall trees and not much on the ground. You look into one of these northern forests and it's so infinite, so *not* human, that it has to mark you." There were critics who bemoaned Ter-Arutunian's "giant sequoias," but Balanchine knew what he was doing. There is no other image in theater today that is as blessedly primal—as omnisciently old as it is newborn.

When it came to the costumes, Karinska tweaked and freshened her originals, most noticeably in the Land of Sweets, adding some stripes here, pom-poms there, refigured necklines, and new satin pajamas for Candy Cane. But the essence remained, because it's hard to improve on the divine Karinska—her lambent colors, her designs a marriage of invention and precision, costume and couture. Wonderful is the way her *Nutcracker* palette moves from the muted William Morris tonalities of Act One to the Ladurée pastels of Act Two, something akin to *The Wizard of Oz*'s leap from sepia to Technicolor. Karinska makes a leap in spirit as well—from decorous restraint to luminous sensuality. The Victorian corsetry that would have been worn under Act One's somber party gowns is laid bare in the fantasy tutus of Act Two, all those sheer, boned bodices—best exemplified in Dewdrop's translucent torsolette. "Two layers of stretch net," says N.Y.C.B. director of costumes Marc Happel. "It's a beautiful little costume but also kind of scandalous." This was Karinska's favorite among all her designs, and every ballerina who wears it loves it—just as they all love dancing Dewdrop, a role of rapturous abandon. At the State Theater, Dewdrop's small flutter of tutu became a spray of pleats.

The most interesting costume change was Sugarplum's. At City Center she wore a white-and-pink tutu with an edging like ribbon candy. At the State Theater she was given two tutus: the first was knee-length, cotton-candy pink, for her solo of welcome at the act's beginning; the second was a short classical tutu of mint green, as Fabergé enamel as it is confectionary. "It gives the second act another level of costume," says Happel. Indeed, she's a fashion-conscious fairy. The pink whispers to the lullaby tones of the celesta (this is a dream, after all) and focuses the solo's delicate pointe work. The green honors the magisterial pas de deux that is the Act Two climax, its grandeur answering the Act One climb of the Christmas tree. Sugarplum is the most precious ornament in these boughs—poetry and matriarchy balanced in one ballerina.

No complete costume from 1954 exists today, but the Grandmother's cape in Act One is original, dating back to the first *Nutcracker* at City Center. And miraculously, in Act Two, the embroidered appliqués on the tunics of the two women in Chinese Tea—clouds, dragonflies, pagodas—are also original, though smokier now. They have lasted because this dance is not strenuous and has no partnering. The newest costume is Drosselmeier's, which was revised in 2011. "He should be elegant and slightly ominous," says Happel, "so we let him have this beautiful top hat, and a nice brocade vest and breeches."

"Another thing that was very important to Balanchine were the faces on the mice," says Rosemary Dunleavy, N.Y.C.B. ballet mistress. "We re-did them. They would bring the head to Balanchine and say, O.K., is this it? No, nose too long. No, eyes not big. He didn't

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THE NUTCRACKER WAS AN INVITATION
TO THE BALLET,
APPEALING TO YOUNG AND OLD ALIKE.



WINTER'S TAIL
Above, a trio of Snowflakes. *Below,* the Mouse King and the Nutcracker do battle surrounded by the Bunny, mice, Marie, and toy soldiers.



SWEETS DREAM
Characters from the Land of Sweets: Tea, Hot Chocolate, Marzipan Shepherdess, Flowers, Dewdrop, the Sugarplum Fairy and her Cavalier, an angel, ballet master in chief Peter Martins, Coffee, Candy Canes, Mother Ginger and her Polichinelles, the Little Prince and Princess.

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ACT TWO ALIGHTS IN

THE LAND OF SWEETS,

WHERE THE SUGARPLUM FAIRY REIGNS.



want over-exaggeration—the nose too projected, the eyes to overtake the face. He wanted it in proportion." He wanted the mice "frightening yet not ferocious," says Balanchine ballerina Patricia Wilde, "more like busybodies."

"He used to love to rehearse the mice," says Govrin. "There were always his pet pieces in a ballet, parts he was constantly either tinkering with or just in there doing it with people." Also, says Barbara Horgan, "the dancers were holding back because they felt silly doing little mice steps."

Finally, a seemingly small but intensely charming change was made at the very beginning of Act Two. The angels were no longer eight big girls who stand at the back; they were now 12 little girls who opened the act with a ceremony of celestial gliding. In their stiff little costumes of white and gold, each holding a tiny branch of fir, they suggest the footless paper angels that graced Balanchine's childhood tree. In yet another instance of his genius, he tailored his choreography to their inexperience. "The angels have no steps," says Dena Abergel, the children's ballet master. "They have skimming and formations. Balanchine is teaching them how to stay in line, how to make a diagonal, how to count to music. Once they've learned angels, they're set up to do the next level of choreography." With crisscrossing paths, a simplified echo of the windblown crossings of the Snowflakes, these angels—newly fledged—consecrate the stage for the dancing to come.

"Balanchine used to talk about children's ballets all the time," says Peter Martins, N.Y.C.B. ballet master in chief since 1989 (he shared the title with Jerome Robbins from 1983 to 1989). "Each child brings four people: mom, dad, sister, and aunt. Multiply this by all the children in the ballet and you have an audience. How brilliant and how pragmatic. And look what happened. Not only did he do it but he did the best *Nutcracker* that you have ever seen, sublime from beginning to end."

"He also felt it was very important," says Suki Schorer, "that young students, young children, dance on the stage. That's why many of his big ballets have children."

"What I heard him say a number of times," says Wilde, "aside from his own recollections of being a child in *The Nutcracker* and how much he loved it, he was thinking of it as a gift to American children. A lovely Christmas experience."

"What makes his *Nutcracker* so fantastic for children," says Robert Weiss, "is it's about them."

Angels' Guardians

"Don't look down," cries Abergel. "Things that fly are up in the air." She's watching S.A.B. girls, row after row, perform the floor-brushing jetés that launch the high-flying Candy Cane number. Every year, in late September, students who want to take part in *The Nutcracker* come to what's called a "costume fitting." The word "audition" is verboten, because it implies a competition when in fact it is the size of the costumes and the height requirements of each dance that decide who will be cast, though certainly the students need to be able to handle the steps. On this day two alternating casts of 63 children each will be chosen for the season's run of *The Nutcracker.* (When possible, best friends are put into the same cast.) In 2013, the morning began with the roles for the oldest kids—the eight girls of Candy Cane—and worked backward, descending in age and size down through the Little Prince and Marie, the eight Polichinelles (a highly coveted role because of its demanding choreography), the 13 children of the party scene (this involves skipping, marching, and pantomime), and the angels and toy soldiers. The Bunny is always the smallest child in the cast. An S.A.B. triumph of recent years has been the growing enrollment of boys; in 2013 they numbered 107 out of 416 in the children's division. For decades, girls simply tucked their hair under hats and caps and, except for Fritz and the Nutcracker/Little Prince, danced most male roles.

When it comes to casting Marie and the Little Prince, Abergel and the assistant children's ballet master, Arch Higgins, have a general idea of who might be right for these parts. As S.A.B. teachers they've been watching the children all year. On casting day they stand the prospective pairs together to see if their sizes are right—the Prince a little taller than Marie—and how they look as couples. Of the four children who danced these leads in 2013—Rommie Tomasini, 10, and Maximilian Brooking Landegger, 11, Clare Hanson Simon, 11, and Lleyton Ho, 13—only Simon wasn't a repeat from the previous year. At the costume fitting she had no clue she was being considered for Marie. Abergel asked her to walk side by side with Ho, and the grace of them together was compelling. Tomasini and Landegger, as bright as new pennies; Simon and Ho, more glowing and yearning—all four dream of joining the company one day. And they all wish to please George Balanchine, even though he died in 1983, when their parents were probably still children.

"I think about him a lot," says Landegger, "and also I read about him." Tomasini says, "I think about him when I dance, because he's my boss." Ho: "I think about how he'd like things to be." And Simon: "He taught a lot of my teachers and they pass on what he said. I sometimes think about if he, I don't know, would like me." Fifty years and Balanchine's primacy hasn't changed. "What I remember," says Merrill Ashley, who in 1964 danced the lead girl in Candy Cane, "is that first stage rehearsal. Balanchine took me by the hand and said, 'This is where you are supposed to go.' And I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. It was like he was a god. Certainly everybody at the school had this opinion. He was the most important person in the ballet world, period."

For the next two months the children rehearse in the evenings, each role requiring about two rehearsals a week. As November pulls on, they are integrated into full-company rehearsals, and the narrative comes together. Clarity of steps, open faces, spacing, timing, energy, and, on top of all that, spontaneity: it's a lot to master. "When we want them in a line, they're not," Higgins has noticed. "When we don't want them in a line, perfect lines." It's details and more details. At a late-November rehearsal, for instance, the children are expressing through pantomime what Christmas presents they hope to receive, and all the boys mime guns. "You don't *all* want guns," exclaims Abergel. "How about books, musical instruments?" And as the children dance and play at the party, she says, "Remember that the audience is part of your world. The stars and the moon are out there."

Christmas Cheer

The Nutcracker traditionally opens the Friday night after Thanksgiving, so the load-in of sets and props, which takes three days, begins the Monday before: electrical pipes and lighting on day one; the special rigging and counterweight for the tree, scenic borders, and backdrops on day two; and lighting focus on day three. Up in the rafters there will be three snow bags that run the width of the stage. These bags, full of tiny holes, are turned by hand to create the snowfall that becomes a blizzard. (Stagehands sometimes come down to see who the conductor is, just to know what the tempo will be.) The snow, 50 pounds of it, is made of flame-retardant paper, and most of it is recycled through the run of the show. Post-performance, big magnets on rollers are used to pull the fallen hairpins out.

On the Wednesday before Thanksgiving and the Friday after, each cast of children has a dress rehearsal. It all proceeds smoothly, no histrionics, no hurry-up-and-wait. The children are familiarized with the surrounding sets and with their marks onstage, tempos are noted, spotlights adjusted. Any number of Dewdrops, Sugarplums, Cavaliers, and Candy Canes will have a chance to zip through their solos onstage. "It comes together seamlessly because everybody is prepared," says Martins, whose first time dancing with the company in New York was in 1967 as the Cavalier in *The Nutcracker.* "Balanchine, he was enormously engaged, particularly in Act One. It was like a Swiss watch. He would take his jacket off, roll up his sleeves, and he would be there, telling people how to act, how to behave. I was just off the boat. I was watching this, and I thought, My God, this guy knows what he is doing. His authority, his insight."

From a technical standpoint the production can be intimidating. Says Silvey, "There are several moments that are fraught with technical peril, where things have to be able to move together. But we have a crew that's been doing this for so many years." On the flip side, some of the production's most magical moments are the result of old-fashioned stagecraft, like the

blizzard shaken by hand from above. Marie's wandering bed, the Sugarplum Fairy's motionless glide in arabesque—the mechanics of these mysteries are carefully guarded. As Balanchine once said, "Don't spoil the magic."

For N.Y.C.B. corps dancers and soloists, *The Nutcracker* means debuts, and it's in the Land of Sweets, with its sparkling divertissements, where they often get their first taste of the spotlight. "For me the most exciting thing," says Martins, "is a month and a half before, when I take my roster out and say, O.K., who should learn what? Who should I teach Sugarplum to? Who should I teach the Dewdrop? This started with Balanchine. He gave people debuts in all the various roles, even important roles. It's a tryout for the next generation." As for the children, "after two or three performances," Silvey says, "it's like they own the place."

The boughs, garlands, and glitter of Balanchine's *Nutcracker* poke, weave, and gleam through the history of both N.Y.C.B. and ballet in this country. Monetarily, what it brings in during its five weeks of sold-out performances is impressive: last year's run of *The Nutcracker* generated just over $13 million, which accounted for roughly 18 percent of N.Y.C.B.'s total annual budget for the 2014 fiscal year. "I used to have conversations with Beverly Sills and her successors at City Opera," recalls Martins. "They used to say to me all the time, 'God, you're so lucky. We have *La Bohème,* but we can't do 40 performances of *Bohème.* You have *The Nutcracker.*'"

It ends with Marie and the Little Prince drawn up and away in a sleigh harnessed to flying reindeer. This flourish was yet another of the changes instituted in 1964, another that took pride and pleasure in the height of the proscenium space; at City Center the two simply took leave in a walnut-shell boat. "They didn't have reindeer at the Mariinsky," Balanchine told Volkov. "That's my idea, that. The audience loves it." True, but the more profound leave-taking comes at the end of Act One, in the ancient forest of white. Turning their backs to the audience, Marie and the Little Prince walk together into the deep and secret darkness of the unconscious, the only pathway to art's firmament. Their footprints are in the snow. And the way is lit by a single star—love. □



ON THE COVER

Bradley Cooper wears clothing by Ralph Lauren Black Label. Hair products by Verb. Grooming products by Lancôme Men. Grooming by Sylvia Viau-Kistler. Set design by Matthew Davidson. Produced on location by Todd Dana. Styled by Annie Psaltiras. Photographed exclusively for *V.F.* by Sam Jones on the back lot at Warner Bros. Studios in Burbank, California.

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- **Backstage access at the N.Y.C.B.** *(Henry Leutwyler, VF.com, December 2012)*

Bradley Cooper



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 50 conceal truth. "He won't let anyone get away with anything."

Good roles with wonderful actors came in after *The Hangover. Limitless,* with Robert De Niro. *The Words,* with Jeremy Irons. *The Place Beyond the Pines,* with Ryan Gosling. Then, in 2011, David O. Russell, a director as quirky as he is brilliant, came into Cooper's life with *Silver Linings Playbook*. He liked Cooper's prior work but still had the sense that he "wasn't hitting his range." Russell remembers them meeting at the Greenwich Hotel, in New York. They talked about the role of Pat Solatano. But Russell remembers that they also talked about "things he had gone through or how he had been guarded or not happy at times in his life.

"He showed me many sides of himself when we discussed my impression of him," Russell told me. "His response was very open and real. There was a mineshaft of experiences and emotions that he had not put on the screen yet."

He cast Cooper as Solatano, sweet, mixed up, and mismatched in his bipolarity, yearning for love but looking in all the wrong places. It was by far his most multifaceted role.

"They really took a chance, a big chance," says Cooper. It resulted in his first Academy Award nomination, for best actor, in 2013.

Following that came another collaboration with Russell, on *American Hustle,* and another Academy Award nomination, in 2014, this one for best supporting actor, in the role of F.B.I. agent Richie DiMaso, beating up his boss one day and wearing hair curlers the next.

He had mastered his artistic niche, a little bit comedic, a little bit terrifying, a little bit off-center. Then he decided to orbit the earth twice.

Tragic Twist

Cooper loved the *American Sniper* project when it was pitched to him by the screenwriter Jason Hall. Warner Bros. had previously passed, but on the basis of Cooper's attachment, the studio purchased the rights to the book in partnership with Cooper's production company, 22 & Indiana Pictures (named after the corner his father had grown up on in North Philadelphia).

Chris Kyle himself was excited when he sold the rights and learned that Cooper was going to play him, although he did have a caveat: "I'm going to have to tie him to my truck, drag him down the street, and knock some of the pretty off of him."

Then Kyle was killed without ever meeting Cooper or knowing that his top choice to direct the film, Clint Eastwood, was actually going to make it.

At the end of January in 2014, Cooper and Eastwood flew into the Midlothian area of Texas, near Dallas, to meet Kyle's wife, Taya, his parents, Wayne and Deby, and his brother Jeff and sister-in-law Amy. Taya Kyle was open and generous, willing to give Cooper anything and everything of Chris's to make the film as accurate as possible. Wayne Kyle was friendly, but he was also guarded. According to Eastwood, "He was a little bit reticent. I just don't know whether he knew what to make of it all, kind of going, 'Who are these Hollywood assholes.'"

They also could not have picked a worse time, since it coincided with the first anniversary of Chris's death. "It's a year after his son was murdered, and two guys from Hollywood show up and say, 'Hey, we're going to make a movie about your son,'" Cooper remembers. "What the fuck? How surreal is that?"

Typical of Wayne Kyle, a former telecommunications manager with Southwestern Bell and as no-nonsense a person as you will find in a state legendary for no nonsense, he sat across from Cooper and Eastwood at the dining-room table in the house where his son's wife and children still lived. "I took the bull by the horns and I said I did not like a movie being made about my son," Wayne says. "I really didn't like a movie being made about my son when he was not there to have direct control." The body of Eastwood's work gave Wayne Kyle reassurance. But, as he put it, "Bradley was a pretty boy and a citified kid. He is an excellent actor, but we really didn't know much about him." He also minced no words in saying that if "you do anything to dishonor my son I will unleash hell on you."

"I knew this was sacred ground that I was on and it was a very special gift that Clint

Bradley Cooper

and I got to be there in this house and meet these people," says Cooper. "It wasn't lost on us." Nor was Cooper's sincerity lost on Wayne Kyle: "I've been around livestock all my life. I can smell bullshit."

Great Expectations

It probably wasn't necessary for Cooper to do the six-page exercise by the time shooting on the film started, last April. During three months of prior preparation, he had temporarily relocated Tim Monich from Connecticut to Los Angeles so they could have two face-to-face sessions of two hours each day except for Saturday and Sunday.

The sessions were in the morning and early evening, sandwiched around two workouts a day of two hours each to gain the 40-odd pounds of pure muscle to resemble Kyle physically. Ideally, Cooper would have had a year. But Eastwood wanted to start shooting in March, before Morocco became too hot.

During his workouts, Cooper listened to the exact playlist that Kyle had when he worked out as a navy SEAL in Iraq in between shifts, sometimes as long as eight hours, enveloped in his own urine because there was no opportunity to take a break when they were targeting insurgents bent on killing American soldiers and suspected collaborators. Kyle is credited with at least 160 confirmed kills.

Cooper bulked up from 185 to around 225. He started eating 5,000 calories a day. He was able at the end to do dead lifts of 415 pounds, five sets of eight reps each.

Former navy SEALs Rick Wallace and Kevin Lacz (he had served two deployments with Kyle) also trained him on how to hold and shoot the various weapons that Kyle utilized. Cooper never equaled the shot from 2,100 yards Kyle once made in Iraq, but he was able to hit targets from 600 yards. Lacz responded the way navy SEALs often respond to superb performance: he said nothing.

Cooper kept in character during the entirety of the shoot. He talked to his girlfriend, the 22-year-old British actress and model Suki Waterhouse, in character. He ordered food at a restaurant one night with dinner companions Miller and Eastwood in character: "Y'all got any red meat?" He argued over another film with producer Harvey Weinstein in character: *Harvey, I just gotta tell ya, man, there's no way that it's gonna be possible for me to do this.*

But it still doesn't necessarily add up to a great performance. Maybe the expectations are too high. Maybe Bradley Cooper really is fucked.

Screen Shot

In November, I saw a 95 percent completed version of *American Sniper* in Screening Room 5 on the Warner Bros. lot. With the exception of those directly associated with the production, I was the first to see the film. So my response was not influenced by any critical reaction, or for that matter the reaction of anyone.

There were times I squirmed because of the violence and sound and heat of war. There were times I felt physical dread. There were moments when I looked at my watch. There was also a moment when, despite my being staunchly unsentimental, tears came to my eyes.

Whenever Cooper was on-screen, I felt I was in the presence of something absolutely astonishing, not simply one of the best performances of the year but a performance for the ages, the kind that creeps into your soul at all hours of the night.

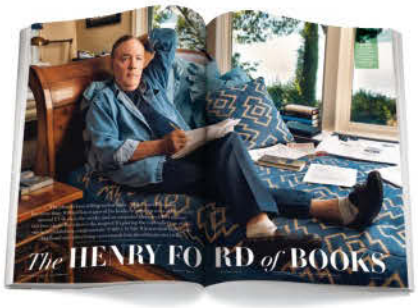
So maybe he isn't fucked after all. □

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- **Jennifer Lawrence, unscripted** *(Jim Windolf, February 2013)*

James Patterson



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 85 Newburgh, New York, just a few miles up the Hudson from his current home, the son of an emotionally withholding insurance agent, whose own father had abandoned his family, and who had grown up in the local poorhouse, where Patterson's grandmother was a charwoman. "The first time I think he ever hugged me was on his deathbed," Patterson says.

The Hudson Valley, with its dramatic palisades and twisting mountain roads, remains a frequent setting in Patterson's fiction. But when I suggested that he hadn't moved so far from where he began, he instantly demurred. "Oh, *very* far," he said. "*Very, very* far."

And he went on: "I think that I felt I needed to be this very bright, first-in-his-class kind of kid, for whatever reason, pretty serious. But underneath, it was just a million stories that I was already telling. You know, I grew up in the woods in Newburgh, and there weren't a lot of people around, and I would just wander in the woods out there and tell myself stories, one after the other. And I didn't really make anything of it. I never thought I was going to be a storyteller or a writer, but I was just in the habit."

At St. Patrick's High School, the Christian Brothers smacked him around a bit, but he worked hard, applying to Harvard, Yale, Colby, and Bates, only to learn that the school had never sent in his applications but had enrolled him on a scholarship at Manhattan College, in the Bronx, instead. By this point, his parents had moved to Massachusetts, where his father got a job with Prudential, and Patterson worked summers on the overnight shift at McLean Hospital, the renowned psychiatric institution in suburban Belmont, to help pay his bills. He began digging into highbrow literature—James Joyce, Jean Genet—to pass the long, quiet shift. A year in the Ph.D. English program at Vanderbilt ended when he got a high number in the draft lottery during the Vietnam War and didn't need to stay in school any longer to maintain a deferment. He took a job as a junior copywriter at Thompson, and in his first year there he wound up doing a dozen television commercials, including a smash hit for the Ford LTD that featured a side-by-side "quiet" test with a Jaguar.

As he rose to positions of power in the company, Patterson made it his policy never to hire anyone he wouldn't like working with. He especially enjoyed working on women's products, both because he had demonstrated a particular assurance in this area and because sessions with female copywriters were more collaborative ("In the male sessions everybody was 'I got it'"). Even today, women are Patterson's most faithful readers.

Patterson's characters reflect his own blend of light and dark. His protagonists are all a bit wounded and vulnerable—not just Alex Cross but also Michael Bennett, another widowed detective (this one an Irish-American in New York with 10 adopted children); Rafe Khatchadorian, a hapless discipline case, who is the hero of the "Middle School" series; and Jamie Grimm, a wheelchair-bound middle-schooler, who is the star of the "I Funny" series and who wants to be America's best young stand-up comic but can work only sitting down. Even Patterson's most villainous bad guys tend to have had a painful childhood or some other psychic heartbreak along the way.

"The Power to Do Things"

In the 1960s, Stan Freberg, the satirical recording artist turned standout adman, promoted Sunsweet pitted prunes with the triumphant tag "Today the pits. Tomorrow the wrinkles." Patterson's forward march is just as determined. The

one hill he feels he hasn't quite conquered is Hollywood (although there have been a couple of Alex Cross movies). "I think to some extent I've been stereotyped," he says. "I think that some of the people there think they're above mainstream fiction. I think they're kidding themselves, but, you know, that's fine." He has recently revved up his efforts with the help of Bill Robinson, a veteran producer, and Leopoldo Gout, a producer and artist and the other co-president at James Patterson Entertainment. Patterson now has a "first look" deal with CBS and has recently announced a raft of new projects, including a 13-episode series version of *Zoo* for the network next summer, and a partnership with Robert De Niro's Tribeca Productions for a pilot for another series based on his first novel, *The Thomas Berryman Number.* "I Funny" has been optioned to Nickelodeon. Out of his own pocket, Patterson has financed yet another pilot for a proposed children's variety series—with blackout sketches, pies in the face, and fake commercials in the manner of *Saturday Night Live* (for products like "Boys' Noise Canceling Headphones")—that Robinson described as a cross between *Zoom* and *The Electric Company.*

"Once they were educated on the power of his reach with kids, once they understood that he's got more people reading his books than some of these networks have people watching, people sit up and take notice," Robinson said. "And an interesting piece of this is that we're dealing with a billionaire, somebody who has more money than some of the studios. He has the power to do things that no other writer can do."

Patterson writes seven days a week, 365 days a year, typically rising with the sun, then walking the course for nine holes of golf at midmorning before having a simple lunch. In Palm Beach, a cook makes maybe two lunches and one dinner a week, but a lot of meals are eaten in restaurants with a small circle of close friends, many stretching back to grade school ("not a self-important blowhard among them," he says). Evenings are spent with a movie or a favorite TV show, including *The Good Wife* and *Justified.* Writer's block is never a problem. If he ever gets bored or stymied with one active project, there are a dozen others to turn to at any one time.

"Where do the stories come from?" Michael Pietsch repeated the question to himself when I posed it. "In his case, it's a drive like I've never seen. He's a very competitive person, but I think he's competitive with himself. Do I wake up at night wondering if it's going to stop? We had a meeting today in which I proposed that we might want to hold off a secondary format of a book for some point in the future when there might not be an abundance of them in future years, and he looked at me incredulously, as if 'When is that going to happen?'"

Patterson himself says his obituary would begin, "He was slowing down at 101, and had only finished four novels that year."

The Pattersons drive matching Mercedes sedans, but when he's in Westchester and has to go to Manhattan, he's apt to take the Metro-North commuter train, simply because it's most efficient. He confesses that he has lately started using private jets for the trip to Florida or for business. Increasingly, Patterson has devoted his time—and money—to promoting literacy and, paradoxically, to supporting independent bookstores, for whom his own books are arguably the least likely source of income. He gave $1 million in grants to bookstores in 2014 alone, which can be used for a variety of purposes. In November, he launched a national campaign to promote reading. He has contributed more than $26 million to his and Sue's alma maters, given another $5.8 million in scholarships at 22 colleges and universities, sent 650,000 of his books to U.S. troops at home and abroad, and provided a box of books to every public school in New York City, Los Angeles, Savannah, Georgia, and Palm Beach County, Florida. Patterson intends to arrange his estate so that about half of his wealth goes to charity, and he hopes that his son, Jack, might someday like to take charge of the giving. His philanthropy at this point is hands-on ("because I think institutions frequently are very sloppy"). He told me that he has no interest in having his name on buildings.

And he is philosophical about his critics, in particular critics of his craft. Patterson decided long ago that he'd rather be a successful popular novelist than a mediocre literary one. He says he thinks of himself above all as an entertainer. And he is keenly self-aware: he knows what he would likely be feeling about himself if he weren't already filling his own shoes. If he were not already James Patterson, he said, "I would be like, 'Well, what's this? He couldn't possibly do what he does.'" Indeed, if he were not James Patterson, "I'd probably be kind of irritated by the guy." □

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Tony Blair



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 60 onetime German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Peter Sutherland, formerly of BP and now the chairman of Goldman Sachs International. The panel's purpose is to facilitate the expansion of a vast natural-gas field in the Caspian Sea and the building of two pipelines across Europe. The $45 billion enterprise, championed by the Azerbaijani president, Ilham Aliyev, has been called by critics "the Blair Rich Project." According to the *Financial Times,* Blair was hired for his experience in dealing with E.U. institutions, given the numerous hurdles the pipelines will encounter as they make their way through seven national jurisdictions.

Blair's government advisory work is "bespoke," according to a spokesman. He can, as in the case of Kuwait, offer basic general advice. Increasingly, he has sought to be a conduit for outside investments in the various countries where he does work, such as Mozambique and East Timor. Blair has helped set up oil investments in the Middle East for the China Investment Corporation. He has acted as a matchmaker, linking businessmen looking to invest with governments seeking capital. In those instances, Blair essentially introduces two parties from his vast global Rolodex.

For Blair, this kind of business is booming. If some of the governments that Blair advises are somewhat blemished, it's also true, as Jack Straw pointed out, that "those governments need advice." Straw said it is impossible to know how to assess Blair's work in a given country without understanding the specific advice he is giving and the nature of the work. But, he added, "unless we should never have dealings with people whose governments don't tick every box, I'm not sure what the criticism is."

IV. "A Pretty Straight Sort of Guy"

And then there is his work for the Quartet, which even Tony Blair finds hard to describe.

One of the few venues in contested East Jerusalem where people on all sides are willing to gather is the American Colony Hotel, established at the turn of the last century by a devoutly Christian American family who took over this Ottoman compound, originally built for a pasha and his four wives. Blair moved into the elegant stone building, its courtyard shaded by mulberry trees, when he took over as the representative of the Office of the Quartet—a somewhat ad hoc position created

in 2002 to provide an official point of contact between the international community and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The Quartet representative is its official voice in Israel. The organization is symbolically important but in practice often ignored. On the day Blair left Downing Street, he took up his new role with the Quartet. President Bush had pushed for Blair's appointment, over the objections of then secretary of state Condoleezza Rice. "Bush said, 'This guy ruined his career to help me,'" a former Blair associate told me. Blair worked out of the fourth floor of the American Colony and eventually hired its banquet manager as his personal chef.

For Blair, obtaining a somewhat official role in the peace process has both a public and a personal dimension. In British politics, religious conviction is tolerated, but only as a private eccentricity. Blair is unusual in the public way he discusses his faith. As a young M.P., Blair had become friendly with a fellow parliamentarian, Lord Levy, who is Jewish. In 1995, when Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated, Levy and Blair, who was by then the leader of the opposition party, attended the funeral together. Levy introduced Blair to a number of local dignitaries. "That is all part of what gave Blair the bug of seeing the Israeli-Palestinian problem as solvable," says Toby Greene, a British academic living in Israel and the author of a book, *Blair, Labour, and Palestine,* about Blair's involvement in the Middle East peace process.

Before Blair, the position of representative to the Quartet had been held by James Wolfensohn, the Australian-born American investment banker and former president of the World Bank. Wolfensohn took the position in 2005. He stayed in the job for 11 months, lived in Jerusalem nearly full-time, and chafed at the limited scope of his influence, which was confined to strictly economic projects designed to help the Palestinian economy. "I was stupid for not reading the small print," he said in an interview with *Haaretz* a year after he stepped down. Wolfensohn said he felt he was a "nuisance" to Elliott Abrams, the neocon senior director of the National Security Council, and was as a result sidelined in any discussions. "My worry for Tony Blair is that if you read the mandate he has—it's exactly the same as mine. It talks about helping both sides, helping the Palestinians, but there's nothing there about negotiating peace." In 2007, when Blair took the job, 10 European foreign ministers wrote an open letter urging him to expand his role. Blair shows no signs of having done so.

One of Blair's few visible accomplishments has been to move the Quartet out of the American Colony Hotel. Part of the reason was to gain a sense of permanence; in a hotel, you can check out and shut down in a matter of days. But the main reason was one of image. Blair has moved his offices up the hill to a fortified concrete-and-glass structure; the yearly rent is about $1 million, less than the space at the American Colony, and the offices appear less ostentatious. In a beautiful city, the fortress-like Quartet building, behind a spiked metal gate, is strikingly plain.

When in Jerusalem, Blair lives on the top floor in a small one-bedroom apartment with a balcony that looks out over the city. Up at seven A.M., he drinks seemingly endless cups of coffee—he gave it up while in office—to fuel his peripatetic lifestyle. He visits the basement gym, but not necessarily every morning. Though Blair is in Jerusalem typically for two or more days every three weeks or so, according to his office, he has recently been staying longer, as when he was attempting to engage Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Egyptian president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in discussions aimed at a Gaza cease-fire. He moves through Israel and the West Bank in the Quartet's black S.U.V.'s. He has a staff of around 50. A security detail, provided by the Quartet, travels with him wherever he goes and stays with him in the Quartet building. They shuttle him from meeting to meeting, his cell phone glued to his ear. In Jerusalem, Blair attends Mass at the chapel of the Notre Dame Pontifical Institute, opposite the Old City's New Gate. He carries no money with him, relying on the Quartet's accounts at the American Colony and the restaurant at the Pontifical Institute.

In the seven years Tony Blair has spent as the representative of the Quartet, Cherie has accompanied him to Jerusalem only a few times. This, plus his frequent dinners with Ofra Strauss, an Israeli heiress to a bakery fortune and a regular at the World Economic Forum, in Davos, has fueled persistent rumors in the Israeli press of an affair between the two. Back home, in Britain, Blair continues to be dogged by rumors that he had an affair with Wendi Murdoch, now the former wife of Rupert Murdoch. Although Blair has denied allegations of any extramarital affairs, the friendship between Blair and Murdoch is at an end.

In a move that some in the British press interpreted as Murdoch's way of seeking revenge for Blair's alleged relationship with his former wife, Murdoch's *Sunday Times* revealed in November a £41,000-a-month secret contract that Blair had signed in 2010 with PetroSaudi International, an oil company founded by a member of the Saudi royal family. The contract included a 2 percent success fee on any deals resulting from introductions he might make—China was very much in mind—and was the first time a detailed contract has surfaced that directly linked Blair to a Middle Eastern oil firm, a tie that the article helpfully noted would "provoke fresh criticism of Blair's role as Middle East envoy."

In some ways, Blair has become the personification of the "peace economy," made up of people who give speeches, hold seminars, write papers, work on side projects, and in general have found a niche in the endless process of brokering peace between Israel and the Palestinians. It is a notion that Ian Lustick, a political-science professor at the University of Pennsylvania, explored in a *New York Times* op-ed column last year. The phrase surfaced frequently as I made my way through Jerusalem and asked people about Blair. There is little sense that he has made a lasting contribution. A prominent Israeli lawyer with deep diplomatic connections told me, "He has trivialized the institution he purports to lead." Mahmoud Labadi, a onetime spokesperson for the Palestine Liberation Organization and later the director general of the Palestinian Legislative Council, says of Blair that his longevity at the Quartet is a sign of his ineffectuality: "He can stay as long as he's not helpful." Hanan Ashrawi, a member of the executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, says, "He is extremely friendly and affable, but that's not the issue."

"What they most want to be is still relevant in politics," a former business associate of Blair's told me, referring to public figures in general but also specifically to Blair. "His Quartet role is very important to him. But if you are doing business there, too, it gets a bit muddy." In fact, it gets very muddy. As noted, for a period of time Blair facilitated discussions on Gaza between Israel's Netanyahu and Egypt's al-Sisi. Al-Sisi also happens to be getting professional advice from Blair. In collaboration with the United Arab Emirates, Blair has been recommending communication advisers to work with him.

In 2009, in his role as the Quartet representative, Blair helped persuade Israel to open up radio frequencies so that a cell-phone provider, Wataniya Mobile, a Kuwaiti- and Qatari-backed telecom company, could operate in the West Bank. He also promoted the development of a major gas field off the coast of Gaza, operated by British Gas. Later it emerged that both Wataniya and British Gas were clients of JPMorgan. Blair maintained that he had no knowledge of JPMorgan's relationship with either company.

A year earlier, as the representative for the Quartet, Blair wrote to Libya's Qaddafi on official Quartet stationery, saying that he was "very interested to hear from you of the progress that is being made and the great opportunities there are for the future," adding that he was "particularly interested in what you said about the funds that will be dedicated to projects in Africa, as I am doing a lot of work there and know of good, worthwhile projects for investments."

In response to criticism about his multiple and possibly conflicting roles—as outspoken diplomat and relentless wheeler-dealer—Blair often adopts the attitude he articulated in the first year of his tenure as prime minister. "I think most people who have dealt with me think I am a

pretty straight sort of guy," he said in a televised apology after his first political scandal. Blair had been accused of lifting a tobacco-advertising ban for Formula One racing as a favor to the organization's head, Bernie Ecclestone, a major donor to his campaign. In retrospect, Blair seems to have obfuscated almost every aspect of the affair. He denied for years that Ecclestone's donations to his campaign had any effect on his decision. But documents revealed by a *Telegraph* investigation later showed that he appeared to have lied about the date when he decided to push for an exemption. He asked for it just hours after he had met with Ecclestone.

V. If Putin Called

During our conversation in London, Blair sat in a wing chair next to the marble fireplace in his office. He wore an open-necked blue dress shirt and a brown suit. On a table nearby were bottles of wine and liquor and a stack of copies of his autobiography, all apparently intended as gifts (and one of the cards bearing the name Ed Milliband, the current leader of the Labour Party). Across the room stood a wooden desk covered with a jumble of papers, along with a large computer and an open laptop. An inscribed photograph of John Kerry sat on the desk. Next to it was the 30th-anniversary issue of *Gay Times,* which had named Blair as one of the magazine's 30 "gay icons"—not for the abs that Cherie admired but for the Blair government's recognition of gay civil partnerships, for its making homophobia a hate crime, and for its repeal of a particularly discriminatory piece of legislation called Section 28.

Blair appeared initially wary—"I'm playing for the long term here, I'm not playing for the next day's newspapers"—but as we spoke, he warmed to the topic of his work. It occurred to me that his multiple spheres in a variety of countries around the world leave him without a core social circle. Influential as he was in British public life, he is now both physically and emotionally removed from it. The allegation of an affair with Wendi Murdoch only hastened that isolation, taking away the array of Murdoch allies who had surrounded him while he was in office. Blair was willing to talk about any subject that might come up, including the full range of criticisms he has been subjected to. He was sometimes defensive, often eloquent, never at a loss for words.

However stoutly he defended his decisions on Iraq and Afghanistan, Blair clearly resented the fact that they have damaged his reputation irrevocably. In a sense, he passed the buck to the legacy of history. "The reason it was tough in Iraq and tough in Afghanistan is the reason it is tough today. At some point, people will understand that it's not because of something we've done. It's tough because the terrorism is deep-rooted and it's got very strong causes within the religion of Islam. This is going to last beyond this president and beyond the next president. All the choices are ugly and tough. So, we went into Iraq, we put in ground troops there. We ended up fighting these people, and we ended up pinning them down there, by the way. But it was long and hard and brutal and bloody and much more difficult than anybody expected."

He went on: "In the end, the most sensible thing is to realize that this problem is huge. It's not something that we've created. It is something we're dealing with, and we are going to have to deal with it for a long time."

I started to ask a further question, but Blair interrupted. "People say, 'Why should you listen to *him?*'—because of Iraq. And I keep saying, that's why you should listen to me. Because I've been through this in government, and since leaving office I've been studying it the whole time.

"One thing that is quite interesting to me is how poor Western governments are at the moment—and I don't exempt mine from this—how poor they are at understanding what's going on in the world. I mean, I find my own understanding of the Middle East, but also further afield, just so much more sophisticated and deep [now] than the understanding I had in government, even with all that infrastructure"—the intelligence services and foreign office and so on. Understanding the developing world in particular, Blair said, is something that eludes governments in Europe and America.

Blair mentioned Egypt, and the toppling of Hosni Mubarak and the coming to power of the Muslim Brotherhood. "People were saying, 'Maybe they'll turn out all right.' I was saying, they're not going to turn out all right. Look, I took a view right at the outset that the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt was a disaster. I supported the street movement to get [Morsi] out of power and put Sisi in office. That doesn't mean I don't criticize them for some of the things that happened in Egypt." But, Blair says, "I helped him. I have been very happy to help. But I'm not some sort of adviser to Sisi. The U.A.E. supports him and helps him with people, and at a certain point we suggested people that he could go and get to help them." Because of that relationship, "I was able to help in ensuring that Egypt was involved and was in the pole position in negotiating a cease-fire. There is going to be no peace between Israelis and Palestinians without the effective participation of Egypt."

One area Blair can't speak about very freely is his role at the Quartet. When I told him that not many Americans have much awareness of the organization, he responded under his breath, "Or anyone else." When I asked what he felt he might accomplish, he actually sighed. "The Quartet," he said, "was constructed in the time of the Bush administration really to manage the international community. My mandate is basically on the economy and preparing Palestinians for statehood." But, he added, "if the politics break down it's very hard to do that." And since 2011 "the process has broken down." The work of the Quartet, as a result, is "deeply frustrating and extremely difficult."

Blair maintained that his government advisory work isn't nearly as lucrative as people think it is. He described it not as work for hire but as work that can change the character of countries. "The question you have to ask yourself is: Why is it that in the 1960s—take Singapore, South Korea, Sierra Leone, and Iraq—why is it that they all had the same G.D.P. and today two of them are First World and two of them manifestly aren't? And the answer to that is the quality of government and the decisions made."

I asked if he has ever run into troubling conflicts because he wears so many hats. Referring to Tony Blair Associates, his first response was to say what any public figure might say: "We have incredibly strict rules we apply." Then he went on to argue that, to a certain extent, strict rules don't really apply to him. "I am a private-sector individual," he said. "So, I will go and meet with some people connected with the Africa foundation, and some people connected with the Quartet, and I'm also chairman of the JPMorgan advisory council. I'm a private individual. I'm not a government department! One of the things people are going to have to get used to is: you are going to get leaders leaving office in their early 50s. I have a lot of energy. I feel extremely fit. There's no way I'm going to retire and play golf." Blair shifted in his chair. "You look at someone like Henry," he said, referring to Henry Kissinger. "He's 91 and he's still going strong. I love that. Or Shimon Peres! These are my role models."

And is there anyone he wouldn't work for? For instance, would he serve as a consultant to Vladimir Putin if Putin called asking for advice? Blair smiled, and switched the topic to Kazakhstan. He said, "I choose the people that I'm working with because I know we are trying to do good things with them. Right? So, to give you an example: Kazakhstan is the size of Western Europe, sandwiched between Russia and China. It has to be and is a partner with Russia; it's making sure it is also an independent country. And it is a majority Muslim country that has welcomed the building of a synagogue in the last few years. So it is a strategically important country for the West. I am not oblivious to the challenges these countries have—the evolution they should have on democracy and human rights."

He paused and then added, "I'm not holding my breath for the call from Putin." But if it came?, I asked. "It won't come, so let me not either praise or insult."

VI. "Torture in a Tin"

In late July, in the midst of the war in Gaza, Blair threw a 60th-birthday party for his wife, Cherie, with 150 people at their Buckinghamshire country house, with dinner, dancing, and a comedy routine—performed for free—by the British comedian Bobby Davro. The *Daily Mail* covered the event, scathingly, noting that

Tony Blair

the Blairs enjoyed "foie gras and a freebie show" even as the "death toll in Gaza passed 1,050." The reference to a freebie show was a dig at Cherie, whose propensity for accepting complimentary services and favors while at Downing Street was widely mocked in the British press. The article noted that PETA had put out a statement in response to the news that the party had served foie gras: "The Blairs are out of touch with many things, including the majority of the British public, who rightly want nothing to do with this torture in a tin."

It is not only Blair's lifestyle that draws negative attention. There is also his continuing participation in public debate. "He wants to be taken seriously—from David Geffen's yacht—admonishing people for not bombing Syria," a former associate told me, referring to Blair's comments last year as the West was contemplating military action against Bashar al-Assad's regime. "People wince at the thought of intervention," Blair wrote in *The Times* of London, "but contemplate the future consequence of inaction and shudder." Around the same time he traveled to Sardinia and was spotted by reporters on the smaller of David Geffen's yachts, the *Pelorus.*

"He's a very curious individual," Robert Harris told me. "The truth is whatever he perceives it to be at a given moment. I don't think he's ever really—I mean, lying. I think he becomes convinced at the moment he's saying something that it's true." In the end, Harris has come to see Blair as fundamentally perplexing, a cipher. The appealing thing about young Tony Blair, he recalled, was that he was "completely natural, pragmatic, sensible, funny, self-deprecating—a pricker of pomposity, and very informal. He seemed the kind of guy you'd go on holiday with, or you'd live next door to and become good friends with." Which made Blair's subsequent transformation all the more jarring.

The most haunting thing about listening to Harris speak about Blair, to my ear, was that his tone wasn't angry. The most haunting thing was that it was wistful about what might have been. □

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First Look Media



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 78 Media.) Huffington spent three days in Hawaii with Omidyar, flying together from island to island for a series of events to celebrate the launch. "Nothing was too much," Huffington remembered. "That's one of the things I love about him." During those three days, Omidyar says, he began to see Huffington as "a trusted friend and adviser." In New York, Huffington organized a dinner at her apartment so that he could meet various media figures. "It ended up being so many people I had to build a new top for the round table," Huffington told me. The guests included Facebook co-founder and *New Republic* owner Chris Hughes and his husband, political hopeful Sean Eldridge; ProPublica editor Stephen Engelberg and his wife, author Gabrielle Glaser; advertising executive and social-strategy author John Gerzema; political and corporate adviser Ian Osborne; CBS anchor and interviewer Charlie Rose; and Facebook C.O.O. Sheryl Sandberg. Omidyar, Huffington says, wrote copiously in a little black notebook that was "small enough to fit in a woman's purse." (Huffington says she has now bought the same kind of notebook to preserve a record of interesting conversations.) At the dinner, Omidyar didn't divulge his interest in launching his own organization, but the guests talked about the challenges and opportunities in digital media, and Omidyar's blood continued to warm.

Soon after, Omidyar and Huffington flew to Dharamsala, India, where the Dalai Lama was hosting a five-day Mind & Life Institute gathering of Buddhist monks and scientists. During the trip, the two discussed the difficulty of launching a destination news site. "That train has left the station," Huffington says she told him, meaning that unlike the Huffington Post, which had launched nine years earlier, when big niches were there for the taking, anything Omidyar did would have to rely more on social-media sharing to build an audience.

In September 2013—after he and Huffington had solidified the Hawaii partnership but before they traveled to India—Omidyar connected on Twitter with Trevor Timm, a young lawyer and co-founder of the Freedom of the Press Foundation, who tweets frequently on the media. The two e-mailed and eventually connected over Silent Circle in an encrypted video chat. Omidyar asked Timm, "If I were to create a new news organization, what kind of an organization would I have to create to support the kind of work that people like Glenn do?" "Glenn," of course, was a reference to Glenn Greenwald. A few weeks later, Timm got back to Omidyar and told him he should get in touch with Greenwald himself, noting that Greenwald and some colleagues were thinking about "some things that might be interesting to you."

Greenwald, Laura Poitras, and Jeremy Scahill had in fact been talking about joining up to launch a new media outlet of their own. They had started to put together a possible investor list, which was how Timm knew about Greenwald's plans in the first place. "He was very humble," Greenwald told me, thinking back to that first conversation with Omidyar. (Again, via video chat. To this day, Omidyar and Greenwald have never met in person.) Omidyar said, according to Greenwald, "I don't know if this is even possible, and you might laugh at me. But I was wondering if you would be interested in playing some role" in getting a new media organization off the ground. Omidyar told Greenwald that he wanted to use his background as a technologist and his reach in Silicon Valley to develop technology and software to revitalize privacy on the Internet, and to allow people to come to journalists anonymously. Greenwald conferred with Poitras and Scahill, and they all agreed to cast their lot with Omidyar as long as they could continue to publish the Snowden documents—that was a given. Talks about what would become First Look Media now began in earnest.

A Hiring Binge

For Greenwald, relationships with media organizations have always been uneasy. He had gained the attention of Edward Snowden through his fiery columns for the online publication *Salon.* In his articles and books, Greenwald railed against not just government surveillance but also civil-rights abuses, U.S. foreign policy in general, and, as often as not, the "Establishment" press. His propensity for attacking *The New York Times* was athletic. No matter what the topic, he could work in a dig about the *Times.* When he started writing for *The Guardian*'s U.S. online edition, he had worked out a relationship similar to the one he had had at *Salon:* his columns were unedited, except to address serious legal or journalistic questions.

At the time of Omidyar's approach, Greenwald and Laura Poitras had spent much of the previous four months in constant contact over the Snowden stories. Poitras, though perhaps more skeptical of the mainstream media than Greenwald, had worked to publish articles with *Der Spiegel, The Guardian,* and *The New York Times* but remained independent and sometimes frustrated with the strictures imposed by big media organizations. Jeremy Scahill, for his part, had dropped out of college, worked in homeless shelters, and was introduced to journalism as a volunteer for the nonprofit televi-

sion news program *Democracy Now!* In 2007 he published a book, *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army,* which won a George Polk Book Award. He came out with a second book, *Dirty Wars: The World Is a Battlefield,* in 2013, and produced and narrated a film by the same name. The film, which focused on U.S. covert actions and drone strikes, was nominated for an Academy Award for best documentary feature in 2014.

Greenwald said to Omidyar that, if he and his two colleagues were to join the new venture, "we were going to need to launch in six weeks," Greenwald told me. The reason for urgency was to be able to continue publishing Snowden material without missing a beat. "He freaked out and said, 'That's a very fast time frame.'" But Omidyar agreed to push ahead, and Greenwald went on a hiring binge. Given how rapidly the organization had come into existence, and how meager the planning, people signed up without any real idea of what the site was going to be. Greenwald's first hires were Dan Froomkin, the Washington-bureau chief of the Huffington Post, and Liliana Segura, of *The Nation.* Soon after came Eric Bates, from *Rolling Stone,* who had edited the financial writer Matt Taibbi and also the magazine's award-winning Michael Hastings story on General Stanley McChrystal. Bates, Omidyar told me, "was somebody Glenn could work with, which is important, I think. The editor-reporter relationship is critical."

Greenwald and his colleagues didn't get every prospective hire they wanted. "They came after everybody," said someone who was recruited. "When this thing came out, pick your investigative reporter and I think they approached them." Among those recruited was Matt Apuzzo, then at the Associated Press, who had shared a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting on the New York Police Department's surveillance of Muslim communities. First Look also approached two of Apuzzo's A.P. colleagues, who had won the Pulitzer with him: Adam Goldman, who would soon accept a job at *The Washington Post,* and Eileen Sullivan. First Look told potential recruits that it was building a site that would have Huffington Post–level traffic but with the smartest investigative reporters in the business. It seemed the organization wanted to recruit a group of big-name journalists and have them join First Look together. But Apuzzo balked at the numbers the First Look recruiter initially suggested for a salary—it didn't seem to take into account the risk of joining a new journalism start-up. In December, it was announced that Apuzzo was going to work for *The New York Times.* Omidyar also unsuccessfully pursued James Risen, the *Times* reporter who, back in 2006, shared a Pulitzer Prize for an early and crucial series on the Bush administration's warrantless-wiretapping program.

The earliest public word of the existence of First Look came in the form of a BuzzFeed story on October 15, 2013, revealing that Greenwald planned to leave *The Guardian* to help launch a new media outlet. Looking back, Omidyar told me that the timing was unfortunate because "it was leaked before we knew what the heck we were doing.

"The initial priority for us, for Glenn, was dominated by how can we create the operational and legal infrastructure necessary to responsibly report on those documents as quickly as possible," Omidyar told me. "That was really the operational focus of the first few months of the organization." He ultimately agreed to fund the appeal of Greenwald's spouse, David Miranda, who had been detained over the summer by British authorities while transporting Snowden-related material. Omidyar created a litigation fund to support press-freedom cases, with Miranda as its first one. In December, Omidyar began thinking about the "first incarnation" of First Look, beyond Greenwald, Poitras, and Scahill, and beyond the Snowden documents. "Our best idea at the time was: We'll create digital homes that we call digital magazines for this collection of journalists around different topics." The early topics, in Omidyar's mind, were national security, the economy and finance, and then, potentially, sports and entertainment.

And the hiring continued. Within a few months First Look had hired Lynn Oberlander, formerly the general counsel of *The New Yorker,* as its legal counsel. Micah Lee, formerly of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, who had helped Greenwald with his encrypted communications with Snowden, was hired to set up online security, and worked from home in Berkeley. Omidyar had also approved Greenwald's suggested hiring of *Rolling Stone*'s Matt Taibbi, who had once famously referred to Goldman Sachs as "a great vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity, relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells like money." Taibbi was to start a site focused on financial and political corruption—which eventually adopted a satirical tone—that came to be called Racket. Omidyar also approved the hiring of Gawker's John Cook, to be editor in chief of The Intercept, the one First Look site actually up and running. The Intercept was dedicated to national-security reporting and in its early days focused almost exclusively on the Snowden documents.

Who's in Charge?

In January 2014, Omidyar asked John Temple, who was at the time doing a fellowship at Stanford, to join First Look's board. "I say, 'John, I need your help. We are trying to build an organization here, a journalistic institution, one that's going to have a large-scale impact over a long period of time,'" Omidyar told me. During their two years together at Civil Beat, they got along well, despite their different approaches. "Pierre likes systems and process," Temple told me. "I'm intuitive." Omidyar had been informally talking to Temple about his new venture since August, but it was only in January that Omidyar asked Temple to officially come on board.

"I viewed the responsibility he had acquired as twofold," Temple, who lives in San Francisco, told me in August, when he was in New York to visit First Look's office there. He said to Omidyar, "Glenn is on the biggest story of his life, and you can't go dark. By necessity you need to create a platform so Glenn can publish." At the same time, "you have to be sure it doesn't dictate the future of the company." Temple argued that the security requirements and "workflow" of the Snowden documents couldn't be that of the entire organization. He set out to help Omidyar determine that "first incarnation" of First Look, beyond the Snowden documents. One of his initial tasks was to organize an event in Laguna Beach, at the Montage hotel, for Omidyar and—according to Stephen Buckley, then dean of faculty at the media-focused Poynter Institute, who attended the meeting—about a dozen editors, journalism educators, industry analysts, and former reporters, to hear Omidyar's vision for First Look, and to challenge him on it.

Around the time Omidyar was meeting in Laguna Beach, the physical reality of First Look was sitting in temporary office space in Manhattan. There were perhaps a dozen reporters in New York, all working under the supervision of executive editor Bates, as well as under Cook and Taibbi. The task at that point was to prepare to launch a number of digital magazines that would feed into Firstlook.org. Taibbi's site, Racket, was still officially unnamed, though Taibbi had hired Alex Pareene, from *Salon,* to be his executive editor. Meanwhile, Temple explained to me, all of The Intercept's founding editors—Greenwald, Poitras, and Scahill—were busy on their own projects. "Laura is in Berlin making a movie. Glenn is writing a best-seller. Jeremy is at the Academy Awards," he said. "It's all stratospheric." The Intercept's first story, published in February, was a joint venture between Greenwald and Scahill on the N.S.A.'s role in the government's drone program. Initially, the site published articles periodically, but the announcements of new hires seemed more frequent than the stories. The Silicon Valley site PandoDaily posted an item in April, "Glenn, Intercepted," noting that no new stories had been posted on The Intercept in nearly 10 days.

Even so, First Look kept growing. But it was hard to say who was running the show. John Temple was still finishing up his journalism fellowship at Stanford. Randy Ching, First Look's C.O.O., was in California. And Omidyar was rarely seen in New York, though he and Temple met occasionally in the Bay Area. And if no one was running the show, it's also true that no one even knew what the show was.

"Up Your Asana"

Expansion without direction—it couldn't last. In April, Eric Bates told Cook and Taibbi that Omidyar had put in place a three-month hiring freeze. If there was a specific need related to the Snowden archive, Bates said, then the hire could go through, but otherwise Omidyar wanted to buy some time to reflect. When

First Look Media

Greenwald and Poitras came to New York to accept a Polk Award for the Snowden stories that had appeared in *The Guardian,* Greenwald, Poitras, and Scahill arranged a video chat with Omidyar about the purported freeze. Omidyar said that there was no freeze and that there had been a misunderstanding. Still, John Cook and Matt Taibbi found it difficult to get hires approved for The Intercept and Racket. In June, Greenwald, Poitras, Scahill, and Taibbi wrote a private letter to Omidyar expressing their displeasure. They complained about arbitrary restrictions on hiring and a lack of clear budgets for the two sites. The letter, after back-and-forth discussions between First Look journalists and management, resulted in a clear budget for The Intercept and increased autonomy. During this time, The Intercept was publishing significant national-security stories, not all of them based on Snowden's documents. Over the course of a month—from early July to early August—*The New York Times* followed three such stories from The Intercept, and credited the site with breaking the news.

In late July, Omidyar announced in a blog post that, instead of launching a variety of sites, First Look would be "building out" The Intercept and Racket. No other sites were immediately planned, and First Look would focus on experimenting with the technical aspects of distributing First Look's journalism, rather than simply creating new content. For some of the journalists who had joined the site expecting to be part of a large, reporter-driven, and all-purpose media organization, the news came as a shock. Omidyar's technical curiosity about the distribution of news was trumping his interest in actual news, some of the journalists said. That impression was partly seeded by John Temple, who had become First Look's president in June. Shortly after he arrived, Temple spoke to the First Look newsroom about his recent stint at Stanford and an inspiring start-up he had encountered that created content for Oculus Rift 3-D gaming headsets to put people into video virtual-reality settings.

Adding to Cook and Taibbi's overall frustration was a suggestion from First Look executives that journalists make use of specific computer programs and project-management software. The editors were encouraged to use a task-management system called Asana. It works like this: a person creates a task on Asana and invites relevant colleagues to join the task. The task has a deadline, and everyone invited can see the chains of conversation about the task. When the task is completed, a box is checked, and the task goes into an archive. Jeremy Scahill jokingly called the program "up your Asana." Matt Taibbi used the program so infrequently he had to be continually reminded of how it functioned.

First Look managers also encouraged the use of RASCIs—responsibility assignment matrices—to manage various projects, whether it was site design or promotional spots. The acronym stands for the five different categories of people on a given project: Responsible, Accountable, Supportive, Consulted, and Informed. Although many of the journalists were not expected to use RASCIs very frequently, editors occasionally had to. In an organization that First Look editors had billed as nonhierarchical, the use of responsibility assignment matrices rubbed some people the wrong way.

By then, the First Look temporary offices had moved to a building in the Flatiron District, near Madison Square Park, in a space once occupied by Creative Artists Agency. Closed-door offices ringed the perimeter, and the center of the newsroom was filled with high-walled cubicles. Over the summer, there were discussions about redesigning the office so it would have an open plan. Cook and Taibbi argued that certain journalists, such as those dealing with Snowden documents, would need to be in a closed office with doors that locked. What resulted was a compromise. Some journalists kept offices, but the rest were in the open newsroom. Some of the extra offices were converted to become "Zen" or "collaboration" rooms. A "seat changing" party was also suggested, in which editors and reporters would throw their names into a hat and draw a new working space. (This party never took place.) A disagreement surfaced over whether the First Look journalists in New York should have landlines. Cook and Taibbi wanted them, but First Look suggested the staff just use their cell phones, and the company offered to buy phones for anyone who needed or wanted one. As a compromise, the company installed phone lines in "quiet" rooms where journalists could conduct interviews if needed.

As Taibbi's relationship with First Look's management was deteriorating, so was his working relationship with a female employee. When the employee, who does not wish to be named, complained about Taibbi's behavior, Temple and Ching called a video-conference with Taibbi, and Temple launched an investigation.

What followed was a set of events that resulted in Taibbi's leaving the company, in late October. On October 30, First Look's founding journalists—Greenwald, Scahill, and Poitras, joined by Intercept editor in chief Cook—wrote an article, published in The Intercept, outlining the reasons for Taibbi's exit. "The Inside Story of Matt Taibbi's Departure from First Look Media" described Taibbi's leaving as "the culmination of months of contentious disputes with First Look founder Pierre Omidyar, chief operating officer Randy Ching, and president John Temple over the structure and management of Racket," the site Taibbi had been hired to create. "Those disputes were exacerbated by a recent complaint from a Racket employee about Taibbi's behavior as a manager," the article maintained. Specifically, a female Racket staffer had "complained to senior management that Taibbi had been verbally abusive and unprofessionally hostile, and that she felt the conduct may have been motivated, at least in part, by her gender." The article also described the "confusion, differing perspectives, and misaligned expectations" between First Look management and the editorial staff. It alleged that Omidyar personally signed off on routine expenses such as taxi rides and office supplies.

In preparing their article, the authors looked into the complaints against Taibbi. Insiders say they debated for days about what to include in their story. An initial version didn't mention the gender of the employee who had raised concerns about Taibbi. The authors circulated early drafts of the story among some Intercept staffers and, based on the feedback they received, particularly from women, determined that they might be seen as protecting a male journalistic star and ignoring the concerns of a female staffer. The final story was not reviewed by First Look's internal counsel before publication.

On October 10, according to the Intercept account, Taibbi left the office claiming he had been stripped of managerial responsibilities (a claim First Look managers dispute). Taibbi maintained that the woman's complaint was without merit. First Look, according to the article, determined that Taibbi was not legally liable for his behavior, just a bad manager. Then Omidyar told him he could not return to the organization as an employee, only as a contractor who would not be managing other employees. This was not acceptable, and he left the company and published an article soon after in *Rolling Stone.* First Look declined to comment on the complaints referenced in the Intercept piece, or to say whether it has routine procedures in place to handle complaints of this kind. The company also declined to comment on its own investigation, to say if it is complete, or to indicate whether the person who lodged the complaint against Taibbi is satisfied with the process.

After Taibbi left, First Look held an all-company meeting during which various employees voiced their displeasure that First Look's management had allowed him to leave. The woman whose complaint had triggered Temple's investigation stood up and said that the reaction she was hearing negated her experience. Another woman stood up and said that the whole episode made her concerned as a woman working in the company. The day the Intercept story ran, Nick Denton had breakfast with John Cook and offered him a job back at his old employer, Gawker, which he ultimately accepted.

I asked Omidyar what he thought of the Intercept article, and he said, speaking carefully, "I need to be in a position where I'm supporting the work of our journalists and I have their backs, especially on high-stakes stuff. And I have no doubts about that." The national-security reporting, he added, "is the stuff that really matters. It's their publication—they can publish what they want. . . . So I'm not going to second-guess their decisions."

As for what lies ahead, the Intercept article noted that, after "months of disagreements

and negotiations," the Intercept editors had reached an understanding with First Look executives and had been given a sizable budget and autonomy to make decisions. The future of Racket, with Taibbi gone, remained unclear.

"I'm Patient"

I met with Omidyar for a second time at the offices of one of his philanthropic organizations, Omidyar Network, in Redwood City, California. Asked about First Look's rocky start, he replied pointedly, saying that "building something from scratch is difficult." He noted that he had done it before. "Lots of people have done it before—but, actually, many more have never done it." He chalked up some of the difficulty at First Look to employees not understanding the normal chaos of building an organization. "Part of being an entrepreneur is taking on a large challenge—having a vision to take on a challenge—and then putting the pieces in place to get there. And a lot of those pieces are not related to the challenge that you're trying to address. They're the infrastructure of a company." He added that the normal difficulties of a start-up are exacerbated by building an organization "that has, at its core, a group of journalists who are doing the most high-stakes, difficult work that there is." He noted that building the organization was a challenge, but "a year in, actually, we're in really great shape." His overall outlook was one he had expressed to me before, when we spoke in Hawaii: "I'm patient."

Silicon Valley executives like to talk about how you aren't succeeding if you aren't failing at least some of the time. By that measure, First Look's first year is a towering success. Perhaps the tensions and battles between the journalists at First Look and their executive counterparts can be interpreted as the typical growing pains of a start-up, with Omidyar cast as the plucky entrepreneur at its helm, tinkering, adjusting, and perfecting his model. But it's more likely that the misunderstandings at First Look derive from a fundamental philosophical divide between two groups. The journalists saw themselves as freethinking, independent, and adversarial, and felt hemmed in by a process-driven management structure. For its part, management thought it was simply providing some much-needed organization—a system—within which the journalists could operate. The hubris that each party brought to First Look probably meant that self-awareness was not at the top of the list of personal attributes.

First Look now faces, at the very least, a difficult recruiting environment. The Snowden material will hold Greenwald and Omidyar together for the foreseeable future. But First Look's reliance on high-maintenance personalities made the turmoil it has experienced almost inevitable. Omidyar has learned quite a bit in the past year, and the lessons he takes away will shape whatever it is he's now left with. One of them may be that cultural transformations aren't easy, even when you're creating the organization yourself. And you have to wonder what Omidyar thinks now, as sanity returns, about that offer from the *Post*. □

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Angela Merkel



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 71 engaging, and intensely curious about America. "She wanted to know everything about NATO, its dual tracking system, U.S. relations with the U.S.S.R. She was very friendly; she basically knew there was a gap in her education." He described her as a woman "just unrelenting in her search for information about subjects she knew were important for her and her future."

One subject, however, that did not engage her then—or now—was feminism. The taken-for-granted tradition of women working in East Germany formed much of her thinking. Rita Süssmuth, the grande dame of the C.D.U., a pioneering feminist, and the second female president of the Bundestag, preceded Merkel as minister for women and youth. "She had big problems with the feminist movement; she believed she was already emancipated by her studies," Süssmuth told me. According to Stefan Kornelius, the authorized Merkel biographer, "She never wanted to be minister for women. She doesn't believe in being seen as a woman." Another of her nicknames in Germany is "Das Merkel," the "das" implying gender neutrality.

Merkel's next post was minister for the environment, nature conservation, and nuclear safety. In 1995 she led the U.N. climate conference in Berlin that produced an agreement on greenhouse-gas emissions, still a pretty big deal. She was elected secretary-general of the Christian Democrats in November 1998, after Gerhard Schröder, of the S.P.D., had been elected chancellor in October. In December, she married Sauer but was so nonchalant about it that she called to tell her parents the next day. Then *das Mädchen* roared.

In late 1999, without warning, a letter written by Merkel appeared in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* saying it was time for the party to move on without her political patron and mentor, Helmut Kohl. After he had been voted out, Kohl found himself mired in a scandal about C.D.U. finances and refused to name the donors involved. (He was not accused of using any of the money for himself.) Many in the German media characterized Merkel's move as a cold act of political patricide.

Kohl's chosen successor as party chief, Wolfgang Schäuble (now Merkel's finance minister), also got caught up in the scandal and had to resign. The way was cleared for her to become party chairwoman in April of 2000. What was left of the C.D.U.'s old-boy network was stunned. "They began to fight against this rising star, Angela, but she got rid of them," says Sabine Rau, of ARD, Germany's version of the BBC. With the exception of Schäuble, she says, "not one of them today is in a party or in government. None survived."

"I was there in Essen when she was elected head of the party, and I walked by a line of these men and I watched their faces. Nobody was delighted or happy," Dirk Kurbjuweit says. "They thought, O.K., Angie, two years for you to sweep away this Kohl mess and then one of us will do the real job. I thought this as well." But, Kurbjuweit says, "because they were all rivals to one another, they could never agree on whom to replace her with. That was their mistake. Then the job was easy; she could take one after another out of the game."

In 2002, despite being the C.D.U.'s leader in the Bundestag, Merkel decided not to run for chancellor; the C.D.U. joined with the right-wing Christian Social Union to back Edmund Stoiber, who lost. Schröder—who had made opposing a potential American intervention in Iraq a major campaign issue—stayed in office. But Merkel was in position to be the next C.D.U. nominee. In February 2003, in the run-up to the U.S.-led war in Iraq, Merkel wrote an op-ed in *The Washington Post* titled "Schröder Doesn't Speak for All Germans." She openly criticized Schröder for using the issue as a wedge, said the threat from Saddam Hussein was real, and insisted that Europe should work in unity with the United States. The Iraq war was deeply unpopular in Germany, but she was staking out her turf. In the 2005 election, Merkel and the C.D.U. ran on a conservative, free-market platform, while Schröder attacked evil capitalism. Neither

party won a clear majority. There was going to be a coalition government, and it was not immediately clear who the next chancellor of Germany would be.

Germany has a curious political tradition called "the elephant round." After the polls close on Election Night, the major candidates appear together on television. Schröder took the opportunity to lay into Merkel, shouting at her that she would never be able to form a coalition with his S.P.D. party, and she would never be chancellor. Merkel was very passive in her responses. "I was there that night at party headquarters and she was in a visible state of shock," says Stefan Theil, *Newsweek* bureau chief at the time. If there was a moment for her opposition in the C.D.U. to take her out, this was it.

As it happened, a feeble attempt was made inside the party to depose her, but no one coalesced around another candidate, and in the end the S.P.D. caved. It formed a grand coalition with the C.D.U.: Schröder was out and Merkel had squeaked in. Says John Kornblum, "She has been mashed potatoes ever since." Bland, safe, predictable.

But not exactly. As nine years of Merkel leadership have shown, when the wind or the polls blow a certain way and she can be convinced by facts, the methodical Merkel can turn on a dime. For instance, after realizing how frightened the German public was of nuclear energy after the 2011 Fukushima disaster, and in anticipation of regional elections, she suddenly backed a policy in which Germany, a country that at the time used nuclear power for 17.7 percent of its electricity needs, would eschew all nuclear energy by 2022.

She debated over a weekend with her minister of the environment, Norbert Röttgen, and made a final decision on Monday while riding an elevator with him. In 2012 Merkel fired Röttgen from his ministerial post after he failed to win state elections for the C.D.U. He made no public comment about being her latest male victim and is now chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the Bundestag, ostensibly enjoying a successful working relationship with the chancellor.

One of the Boys

Angela Merkel remains distinctly unimpressed with many male politicians, and she frequently one-ups them, even when she likes them. As outgoing U.S. ambassador Philip D. Murphy rose to give an effusive toast in German at an intimate farewell dinner in the summer of 2013, his notes quoting J.F.K. printed on index cards, Merkel reached up and snatched the cards right out of his hand and mischievously placed them under the napkin on her lap. "Your German's good enough to do it without these," Merkel said. "Let's hear it."

Says Annette Heuser, executive director of the Bertelsmann Foundation in Washington, D.C., "Merkel does not define herself as a female—she has defined her own class, which is heavyweight champion." Although Merkel got her start and promotions from men, she always benefited from being underestimated, in part because she looked so young, geeky, and frumpy; she smoked and bit her fingernails practically down to the cuticles. Additionally, Merkel's peers were the men who rose through the party ranks, beginning in the C.D.U. as teenagers, and its leaders, such as Kohl, were revered as father figures within the party. Merkel never really saw it that way.

Today, she has to contend with two dominant male figures on the world stage, Vladimir Putin and Barack Obama. Roderich Kiesewetter, a C.D.U. member of the Bundestag and a data-security expert, told me that the chancellor spent more than 110 hours on the phone with Putin in 2014, though Germany's Information Ministry downplayed that number. Merkel's Russian is as good as Putin's German. Growing up in East Germany, Merkel won a prize as a teenager for being the third-best student Russian speaker in the G.D.R. The award included a trip to Moscow, where she took the opportunity to buy her first Beatles record. For his part, Putin spoke German while stationed in Dresden as a not terribly successful K.G.B. agent, where his mission was to recruit Stasi members for the K.G.B.

The Germans and the Russians have a long history of being philosophical and literary soulmates when they are not trying to annihilate each other. Merkel keeps a small portrait of Russia's Catherine the Great on her desk. In past years, Germany blocked NATO expansion that was being pushed by the U.S. ever closer to Russia's borders. Germany obtains 36 percent of its natural gas from Russia, and Gerhard Schröder, who is still influential in S.P.D. circles, became so chummy with Russia that his revolving door after the chancellery led right to a position on the board of Gazprom, Russia's chief energy conglomerate; last spring in St. Petersburg, on Schröder's 70th birthday, Putin even came by to give Schröder a hug and wish him a happy birthday.

Merkel's relationship with Putin isn't that buddy-buddy, even though Putin was so grateful to Germany in 2008 for preventing NATO expansion into Georgia and Ukraine that, according to Stefan Kornelius's biography, he promised Merkel he "would never forget what she had done." She had learned to be skeptical. Only a year previous, knowing Merkel has a fear of large dogs stemming from an incident in which she was bitten, Putin had his large black Lab, whose name is Koni, run into the room during one of their private meetings and stay beside him while he and Merkel sat across from each other. Merkel did not flinch. (Photos of the meeting show the dog burying her head in Merkel's lap.)

Merkel recently told a group of German high-school students, "Maybe Russia does not want to share our values. That may very well be the case and we can't force anything." But about the crisis in Ukraine, she said, "If we have to watch how a country is de-stabilized and then gets weaker and weaker, then we have to try to help this country." Indeed, by October of last year, Germany was considering sending troops to Ukraine to assist international monitors there, and, in November, Merkel delivered a strongly worded rebuke to Russia following the G-20 Leaders' Summit.

"People have come to understand the evil intentions of Putin, so the public mood has changed toward Putin," says Norbert Röttgen. Roderich Kiesewetter told me that "Putin understandings" has become a standard expression in the chancellor's circle: "She reaches an oral agreement and then one day later, two hours later, he doesn't remember." After one particularly vexing round of phone calls in March, it leaked that Merkel had confided to Obama that Putin lives "in another world." The leak may have come from the White House, and the Germans were not pleased. When I asked a German official to confirm the statement, he very pointedly said, "*We* never divulge the content of confidential conversations."

Even though President Obama presented Merkel with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, our highest civilian honor, and gave her a state dinner in 2011, she and Obama have none of the coziness between them that may have prompted George W. Bush to surreptitiously approach Merkel from behind and squeeze her shoulders at a Group of 8 summit in 2006. (*The New York Times* called it "the neck rub heard round the world.") Obama has not learned how to break the ice with her, or perhaps does not care to. Tricky relations between U.S. and German heads of state aren't entirely new. "Kennedy and Adenauer hated each other," Kornblum says, "and Schmidt thought Carter was a damned preacher in the White House." Merkel and Obama are correct with each other, both realizing their importance to each other, though Merkel's importance seems only to increase every day. "Nowadays they are on an eye-to-eye level with us," says Tony Czuczka, who covers Merkel for Bloomberg and co-wrote a Merkel biography. "Merkel doesn't have to take advice from the Obama administration. Obama very consciously has delegated key parts of what needs to be done in Europe to Merkel in the last five years." Often that puts Merkel right at the pressure point between Obama and Putin.

Moreover, because of the "lies and deceptions" of the Iraq war, drones, the N.S.A. phone-tapping scandal, and spying revelations, as I heard over and over, it's a new day for relations between Germany and the United States. "As a role model America has lost its fascination," says Sebastian Turner, co-owner of the Berlin-based daily *Der Tagesspiegel.* Polls today show Germans less favorably disposed toward the U.S. and Obama than they were just a year ago.

From the beginning of his first presidential campaign, when all of Germany seemed to develop a mad, passionate crush on Barack Obama, Merkel, perhaps because she is no orator, was highly suspicious of Obama's appeal. First she was against his giving a campaign speech at the Brandenburg Gate in 2008, which seemed intended as a kind of encore to Reagan's "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" and an echo of J.F.K.'s "Ich Bin ein Berliner." Instead, candidate Obama spoke before 200,000 people, the largest crowd of the entire campaign, at the nearby Tiergarten. Dirk Kurbjuweit says that, at the time, Merkel told him that Obama's charisma—the very idea of which is antithetical to everything that is Angela Merkel—was overrated: "When he's running, he can shine, but when he is in office he will have very different tasks. You can't solve the tasks with charisma."

One mystery that remains is the role that Merkel's highly intelligent husband, Joachim Sauer, plays in advising his wife. Although people told me that he plots with her and is very influential, I never got any concrete examples. Still, according to Stefan Kornelius, "He's a guy who is even stronger politically [in his views] than she is. He advises her even now."

Sauer, a professor of theoretical chemistry at Humboldt University, in Berlin, is so private that he travels everywhere without visible security. On the day Merkel got the Presidential Medal of Freedom in Washington, he showed up late for the state dinner. He rarely travels anywhere officially with his wife and was criticized for skipping her inauguration altogether in 2005. He did, however, play the kind spouse, taking Michelle Obama and the daughters to see Berlin. Sauer spent a year working in San Diego in the 1990s, and the California coast remains one of the couple's favorite vacation spots, even though they cannot travel there anymore because of the distance and obvious time constraints.

He and Merkel live in an apartment in an old building right across from the picturesque Museum Island, in Berlin. The night I drove by, there was a lone policeman outside and a couple who apparently also lived in the building fiddling with the lock. Merkel and Sauer, who prefer classical music and opera to any other form of culture, go to the Bayreuth festival every year, and bloggers delight in posting photos that show the chancellor wearing the same colorful tunic there for about 15 years. But this no-frills style is very appealing to Germans: she is not a spendthrift; she cannot be bought!

Merkel cultivates her own form of down-home style: she is a genuine soccer fan and avidly roots for Germany in the World Cup (she was in Rio last summer when they won); she occasionally goes grocery shopping on her own; she likes to cook; she spends off time at a small dacha not far from Templin that she bought before she got involved in politics. Gahl Hodges Burt, the vice-chairman of the American Academy in Berlin, was once getting her hair done at Udo Walz's salon—he is the Mr. Kenneth of Berlin—and looked up to see Angela Merkel in the chair right next to her, with hair color waiting to set, working away on her BlackBerry, just another client. Her only security, Burt said, was two men standing outside, sipping coffee.

Fourth Time Around?

There is no term limit for German chancellors, and people have already begun to speculate as to whether Merkel will run for a fourth term in 2017, and, if not, who her successor will be. She has eliminated most of the competition. (Note to Hillary Clinton, who is known to share a rapport with the chancellor: in the last election Merkel's opponent accused her of having a *Frauen-bonus,* a bonus for being a woman, and a poll showed the German public preferred that she run against a woman.) The pol who appears to most want to succeed Merkel is a woman and could not be more different. Minister of Defense Ursula von der Leyen, also of the C.D.U., is a petite, outspoken, 56-year-old medical doctor and mother of seven. It is said that she is not a favorite of Merkel's. She has not been defense minister for long, but, bad luck for her, she has to take the brunt of criticism for the ill-prepared state of German military equipment.

One rumor you hear is that Merkel wants to follow Ban Ki-moon as secretary-general of the U.N. There is also speculation that she will stick around for a fourth term just to see if she can ultimately take down the Big Dog—Putin. "We think he has a hidden strategy to disturb and weaken the E.U. to cause it to split," Kiesewetter told me.

There are other serious issues brewing inside Germany. Her country has one of the lowest birthrates in the E.U., and 35 percent of children under five have an immigrant background, mostly Muslim. At the current rate, Germany could acquire a million refugees every five years. How will they be integrated into German society? Because the re-unification of East and West Germany cost about a trillion euros, spending on infrastructure and education has suffered, and Germany has failed to spawn anything yet resembling the innovation of Silicon Valley.

"What has she done for the Germany of the future—to make Germany more dynamic? The jury is out," says Bloomberg's Tony Czuczka. "Germany faces all these challenges. Is she resting on Germany's laurels? That really is the question, especially for economists, of the third term."

Nearly 70 years after the end of World War II and 25 years after re-unification, Germans may still want to think of themselves as a big, uninvolved Switzerland, but they certainly telegraph power in their architecture. One day I went to see Merkel give a press conference in her dramatic, sweeping, ultra-modern glass-and-concrete Chancellery building, which happens to be 10 times the size of the White House and one of the biggest government headquarters in the world. An oversize female nude sculpture, titled *The Philosopher,* stood in front of the north entrance's grand stairway; it is intended "to epitomize the person who likes to take time to reflect." Whoever wrote that definitely got Merkel's number. At the top of the staircase to the right is a row of portraits of Merkel's predecessors, all male, their names evoking history and glory: Adenauer, Brandt, Kohl. But Angela Merkel has acquired more power on the world stage than any of them. And yet, as *Die Zeit*'s Mariam Lau told me, "she's a riddle."

When I pressed the C.D.U.'s Roderich Kiesewetter about a potential fourth term, he told me he has heard Merkel say she does not want to risk losing an election. She prefers to find a way to turn the job over to a handpicked successor. Kiesewetter is convinced that Merkel is already working on a candidate, but he refused to reveal a name: "It's a surprise." □

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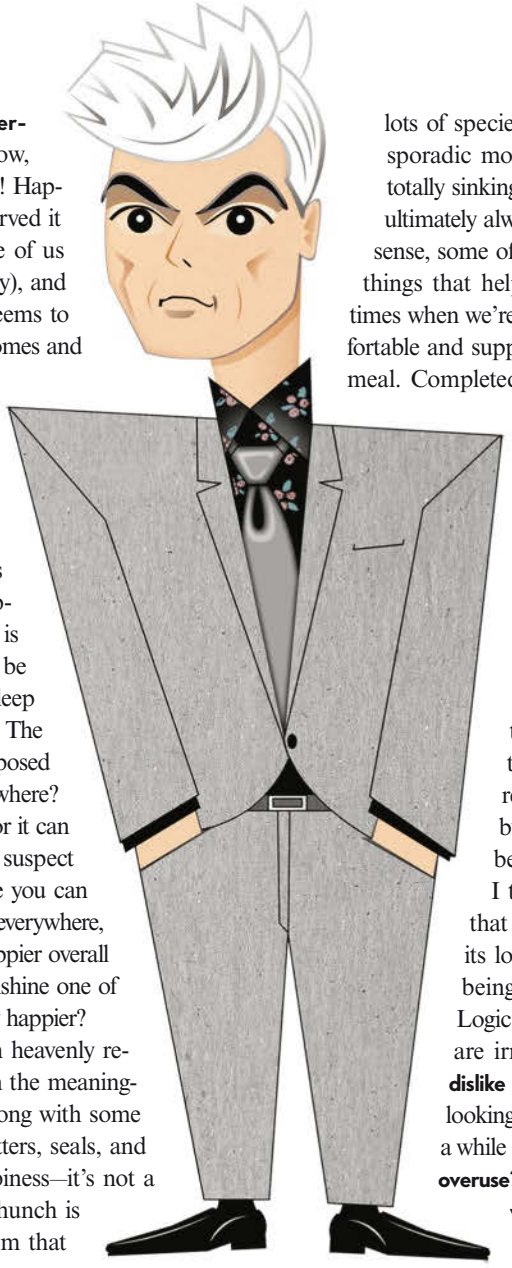
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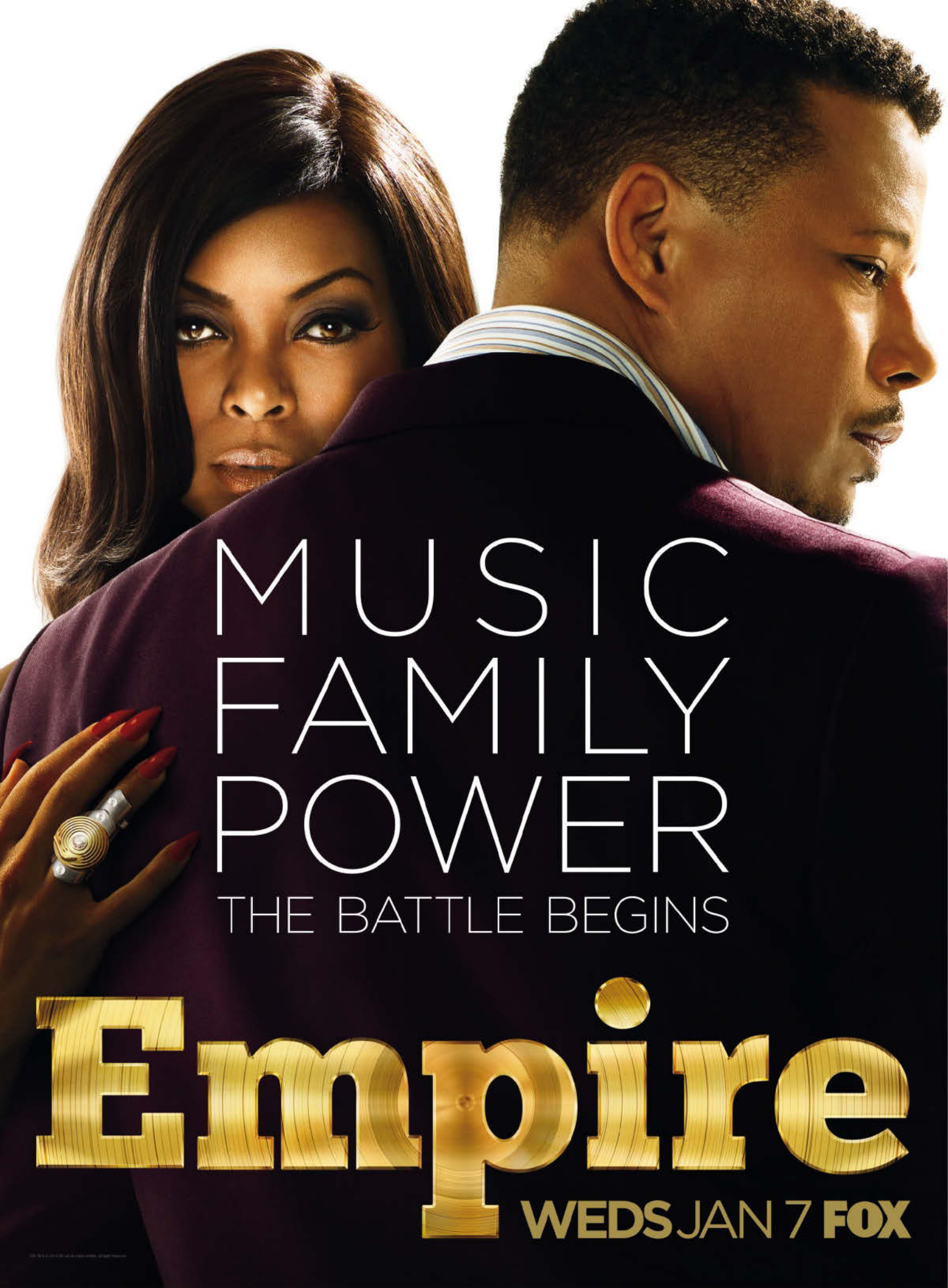
The Talking Heads' award-winning front man has made it into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. With his musical, *Here Lies Love*, embarking on a global tour this year, he waxes poetic on the randomness of happiness



What is your idea of perfect happiness? Wow, these are big questions! Happiness, as I've experienced it and observed it in others, seems to be random—some of us are happy fairly regularly (I am, mostly), and some of us not as much—but there seems to be no clear explanation as to why. It comes and goes at unexpected moments, too. The graph of happiness doesn't even seem to match what is going on in our lives. Or maybe it does and we don't know it. Money—is there a connection between money and happiness? It takes away a world of worries and anxieties, but are rich folks all happy? Are you kidding? Donald Trump is ALWAYS scowling. That said, it's hard to be happy if you don't know where you'll sleep or where your next meal is coming from. The pursuit of happiness? Where are we supposed to look? Are there clues hidden somewhere? The very act of searching and striving for it can lead to frustration and unhappiness. I suspect that happiness finds you—I'm not sure you can find a road that leads to it. Happiness is everywhere, though some cultures are, I've read, happier overall than others—G.N.P. be damned. Is sunshine one of those things? Are tropical folks generally happier?

They would, if you don't believe in heavenly rewards, be then deemed the winners in the meaning-of-life sweepstakes. Those cultures, along with some of our animal friends. Dogs, birds, otters, seals, and dolphins have moments of pure happiness—it's not a feeling unique to human beings. My hunch is that it's an evolved survival mechanism that lots of species share—we have evolved to have regular sporadic moments of happiness. They keep us from totally sinking into contemplating our life stories, which ultimately always have a bad ending. In an evolutionary sense, some of those joyous moments might be clues to things that help us survive. Happiness emerges sometimes when we're around family and friends—if it's a comfortable and supportive situation. When we've had a good meal. Completed a task or had an inspiration. **What is your greatest fear?** I'll know it when I see it. Hello, Room 101. **Which historical figure do you most identify with?** Not sure about identify—but there are figures I admire, like M.L.K. . . . Bob Rauschenberg. Gandhi, Mandela. **Which living person do you most admire?** Aung San Suu Kyi, Caetano Veloso, Terry and Jo Harvey Allen, Ford Wheeler, Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning. My late father. **What is your favorite journey?** From the barroom to the bedroom . . . that's not really true—it just popped into my head, but, wow, it sounds like a song waiting to be written! Maybe a song for someone else, I think. My favorite journey is the journey that an idea takes when taken all the way to its logical conclusion—which usually ends up being a place that is surreal and ridiculous. Logic and rationality taken all the way to the end are irrational and nonsensical. **What do you dislike most about your appearance?** I stopped looking in the mirror or at shopwindow reflections a while ago. **Which words or phrases do you most overuse?** "In my opinion." **When and where were you happiest?** Hanging with friends. Kissing someone. Singing. Riding a bike.

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